Homs Invasion

ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Arab League monitors gathered accounts about the Syrian government's crackdown on dissent in the central city of Homs Wednesday as fresh violence flared just dozens of miles away. Activists said troops opened fire on thousands of un-



A Syrian doctor, left, treats civilians wounded by Syrian army shelling in the Baba Amr area, in Homs province, Syria. Arab League monitors kicked off their one month mission in Syria with a visit on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2011 to Homs, the first time Syria has allowed outside monitors to the city at the heart of the anti-government uprising. Several from the team of 12 stayed in the city overnight, and the team continued to work in Homs on Wednesday. The monitors are expected to visit Hama, Idlib and Daraa on Thursday, Dec. 29, all centers of the uprising. (AP Photo)

armed protesters, killing at least six. Though President Bashar Assad's regime has made concessions to the observers, including the release of nearly 800 prisoners, the military was pressing ahead with a campaign to put down mostly peaceful protests.In the two days since the Arab monitors arrived, activists said troops have killed at least 39 people, including the six shot in the central city of Hama on Wednesday.

Continued on Next page

Straight Forward



Iranian navy members take positions during a drill in the Sea of Oman, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011. Iran's navy chief warned Wednesday that his country can easily close the strategic Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, the passageway through which a sixth of the world's oil flows. The navy is in the midst of a 10-day drill in international waters near the strategic oil route.

(AP Photo/IIPA,Ali Mohammadi)

ALI AKBAR DAREINI TAREK EL-TABLAWY Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The U.S. strongly warned Iran on Wednesday against closing a vital Persian Gulf waterway that carries one-sixth of the world's oil supply, after Iran threatened to choke off traffic through the Strait of Hormuz if Washington imposes sanctions targeting the country's crude exports. The increasingly heated exchange raises new tensions in a standoff that has the potential to spark military reprisals and spike oil prices to levels that could batter an already fragile global economy.

Iran's navy chief said Wednesday that it would be "very easy" for his country's forces to close the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the passage at the mouth of the Persian Gulf through which about 15 million barrels of oil pass daily. It was the second such warning by Iran in two days, reflecting Tehran's concern that the West is about to impose new sanctions that could hit the country's biggest source of revenue, oil.

"Iran has comprehensive control over the strategic waterway," Adm. Habibollah Sayyari told state-run Press TV, as the country was in the midst of a 10-day military drill near the strategic waterway.

The comments drew a quick response from the U.S.

"This is not just an important issue for security and stability in the region, but is an economic lifeline for countries in the Gulf, to include Iran," Pentagon press secretary George Little said. "Interference with the transit or passage of vessels through the Strait of Hormuz will not be tolerated."

Separately, Bahrain-based U.S. Navy 5th Fleet spokeswoman Lt. Rebecca Rebarich said the Navy is "always ready to counter malevolent actions to ensure freedom of navigation."

Rebarich declined to say whether the U.S. force had adjusted its presence or readiness in the Gulf in response to Iran's comments, but said the Navy "maintains a robust presence in the region to deter or counter destabilizing activities, while safeguarding the region's vital links to the international community."

Iran's threat to seal off the Gulf, surrounded by oil-rich Gulf states, reflect its concerns over the prospect that the Obama administration will impose sanctions over its nuclear program that would severely hit its biggest revenue source. Iran is the world's fourthlargest oil producer, pumping about 4 million barrels a day.

Gulf Arab nations appeared ready to at least ease market tensions.

Continued on Next page



US warns Iran against closing key oil passage

official told The Associated Press that Gulf Arab nations are ready to step in to offset any potential loss of exports from Iran. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment on the issue.

Saudi Arabia, which has been producing about 10 million barrels per day, has an overall production capacity of over 12 million barrels per day and is widely seen as the only OPEC member with sufficient spare capacity to offset major shortages.

What remains unclear is what routes the Gulf nations could take to move the oil to markets if Iran goes through with its threat. About 15 million barrels per day pass through the Hormuz Strait, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

There are some pipelines that could be tapped, but Gulf oil leaders, who met in Cairo on Dec. 24, declined to say whether they had discussed alternate routes or what they may be.

The Saudi official's comment, however, appeared to allay some concerns. The U.S. benchmark crude futures contract fell \$1.98 by the close of trading Wednesday on the New York Mercantile Exchange, but still hovered just below \$100 per barrel.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner played down the Iranian threats as "rhetoric," saying, "we've seen these kinds of comments before."



Members if the Iranian Navy participat in Iran's navy drill in the Sea of Oman on Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011. Iran's navy chief warned Wednesday that his country can easily close the strategic Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, the passageway through which a sixth of the world's oil flows. The navy is in the midst of a 10-day drill in international waters near the strategic oil route.

(AP Photo/Fars News Agency, Hamed Jafarnejad)

While many analysts believe that Iran's warnings are little more than posturing, they still highlight both the delicate nature of the oil market, which moves as much on rhetoric as supply and demand fundamen-

Iran relies on crude sales for about 80 percent of its public revenues, and sanctions or even a pre-emptive measure by Tehran to withhold its crude from the market would already batter its flailing economy.

IHS Global Insight analyst Richard Cochrane said in a report Wednesday that markets are "jittery over the possibility" of Iran's blockading the strait. But "such action would also damage Iran's economy, and risk retaliation from the U.S. and allies that could further escalate instability in the region."

"Accordingly, it is not likely

to be a decision that the Iranian leadership will take lightly," he said.

Earlier sanctions targeting that Iran is trying to develop the oil and financial sector added new pressures to the country's already struggling economy. Government cuts in subsidies on key goods like food and energy have angered Iranians, stoking inflation while the country's currency steadily depreciates.

The impetus behind the subsidies cut plan, pushed through parliament by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was to reduce budget costs and would pass money directly to the poor. But critics have pointed to it as another in a series of bad policy moves by the hardline president.

So far, Western nations have been unable to agree on sanctions targeting oil exports, even as they argue

a nuclear weapon. Tehran maintains its nuclear program — already the subject of several rounds of sanctions — is purely peaceful.

The U.S. Congress has passed a bill that penalizes foreign firms that do business with the Iran Central Bank, a move that would heavily hurt Iran's ability to export crude. European and Asian nations use the bank for transactions to import Iranian oil.

President Barack Obama has said he will sign the bill despite his misgivings. China and Russia have opposed such measures.

Sanctions specifically targeting Iran's oil exports would likely temporarily spike oil prices to levels that could weigh heavily on the

Activists:

Syrian troops kill more protesters



Anti-Syrian regime protesters shout slogans during a demonstration in the Baba Amr area, in Homs province, Syria, Arab League monitors kicked off their one month mission in Syria with a visit on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2011 to Homs, the first time Syria has allowed outside monitors to the city at the heart of the anti-government uprising.(AP Photo)

The continued bloodshed - and comments by an Arab League official praising Syria's cooperation have fueled concerns by the Syrian opposition that the Arab mission is a farce and a distraction from the ongoing killings.

The opposition suspects Assad is only trying to buy time and forestall more international sanctions and condemnation.

"This mission has absolutely no mandate, no authority, no teeth," said Ausama Monajed, a member of the Svrian National Council. the main opposition group.



US declines to cite China as currency manipulator

CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration on Tuesday declined to label China a currency manipulator after seeing recent increases in the value of the yuan compared to the dollar. The decision angered unions and lawmakers that have accused Beijing of artificially holding down the value of its currency to gain trade advantages. A cheaper yuan makes Chinese goods less expensive when they are shipped to the United States. It also makes U.S. goods more expensive in China. Both could increase the U.S. trade deficit with China, which is on pace to hit a record high this year.

The Treasury Department said the yuan has appreciated 12 percent against the dollar in the past 18 months, after adjusting for inflation. In addition, the department said in a semi-annual report that China promised at two high-level meetings last month to make the yuan's exchange rate more flexible. Still, yuan is "substantially undervalued" and its appreciation "is insufficient and more progress is needed," the report noted. The department will "press for policy changes that yield areater exchange rate flexibility" and "level the playing field."

Putin rejects calls to talk with protest leaders

MOSCOW (AP) — Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has rejected calls to hold talks with opposition leaders who have brought tens of thousands of Russians into the streets to demand an end to his 12-year rule, saying he doesn't know what the demonstrators want or who he would talk to.

Putin has belittled the opposition even as his government has rolled out a set of proposed reforms in response to outrage over the Dec. 4 election for parliament, in which only Kremlinapproved parties were allowed to run and observers reported widespread vote-rigging. Putin hopes to return to the presidency in a March vote.

The opposition leaders "should formulate some kind of common platform and common position, so that it's possible to understand what people want," a smiling Putin told a group of Russian reporters on Wednesday.

"Is there a common platform? No. Who is there to talk to?"

The organizers of the two vast Moscow rallies this month included many prominent public figures and opposition leaders. Although some differ widely in their political views, they have



Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin speaks at the government headquarters during a meeting with his staff in Moscow. Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011. Putin has rejected a possibility of talks with Russian opposition leaders who drew tens of thousands of people in protest rallies across the country.

(AP Photo/RIA Novosti, Alexei Nikolsky, Pool)

passed joint resolutions with a list of concrete demands, including a rerun of the parliamentary election, the resignation of the Central Election Commission chief and the removal of barriers that have prevented opposition parties from taking part in elections.

The protests, unprecedented in post-Soviet Russia, have undermined Putin's image as the inevitable winner of the March vote. He previously served as president in 2000-2008. Putin has promised to ease

rules for opposition candidates and make the voting process more transparent, but he has firmly rejected the demand that the parliamentary election be rerun. Putin's former finance minister, Alexei Kudrin, has offered to help mediate between the opposition and the government. Leaders of the opposition said Wednesday that they welcomed Kudrin's offer and would present their principles and conditions for talks by the end of the week.

Asked Wednesday about

his refusal to take part in campaign debates, Putin said it would make no sense since the opposition leaders are "not burdened with real work" and "always demand the impossible."

His contention is that opposition candidates can promise voters anything, while he as prime minister bears greater responsibility and has to follow through on his promises. He has offered to arrange for "younger brothers," his subordinates in the government, to take part in the televised debates.

Thursday, December 29, 2011 U.S. NEWS

Obama campaign quietly mounts strong lowa campaign

Next Tuesday's Republican caucus has dominated political conversations. Largely overlooked is that Obama is running unopposed in the Democratic caucus the same night.

The president's campaign claims an impressive effort in the key nominating state of lowa this year: eight offices opened, 350,000 phone calls to potential supporters and 1,280 events to recruit and train volunteers.

The goal is next November, when the president's campaign badly wants to win this battleground state, as it did in 2008.

Nowhere does Obama have a bigger base to build on than in lowa, where he campaigned for months in 2007. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, ex-House Speaker Newt Gingrich and other Republican contenders have not made comparable efforts, although they say the economy and other issues will make Obama's task much harder next year.

It's a dramatically different scene from four years ago, when Obama set his course for the White House by beating John Edwards and Hillary Rodham Clinton after months of intense campaigning in lowa.

No one assumes that victory or his 9-point win here over then-Republican nominee John McCain in 2008 will give him a cushion in the general election.

Obama's campaign never entirely left lowa or several other competitive states, where he hopes relentless organizing can overcome a weak economy and his mixed record of fulfilling campaign pledges in the face of strong Republican opposition in Congress.

If thousands of volunteers flocked to Obama's 2008 campaign, this time he's having to work a bit harder to recruit and energize them.

"People say, 'The mood is different this time, it's not the same,'" said Peggy Whitworth, an Obama volunteer in Cedar Rapids. "Well of course it's not the

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — same. But it's not about telephone potential sup- es such as ending the Bushmood or feeling. It's about the future of the country." Whitworth, 69, said she joins

porters. Many say they will vote for Obama again, she said, and some volunteer era tax cuts for the wealthy, and bringing a greater spirit of bipartisanship to Wash-



President Barack Obama holds hands with his daughters Malia, left, and Sasha, right, as they leave Sea Life Park, a marine wildlife park, with family friends, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2011, in Waimanalo, Hawaii. Next Tuesday's Republican caucus has dominated political conversations. Largely overlooked is that Obama is running unopposed in the Democratic caucus the same niaht. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)

other Obama volunteers four hours every Tuesday night, and sometimes on

other evenings as well, to

to help the campaign. But some are disappointed or angry that the president fell short on campaign promis-

ington.

"Sometimes they simply want to have someone listen to them," Whitworth Election Day.

said. Most say they will stick with Obama after they've had a chance to vent their frustrations, she said.

Obama lacks some key advantages he enjoyed in 2008. They included a deeply unpopular Republican president, George W. Bush, who was largely blamed for a faltering economy, and a widespread excitement about Obama.

In exchange, of course, he has the power of the presidency and a well-oiled political organization that has been refining its practices for five years.

Obama will raise many millions of dollars, although his eventual Republican opponent may do nearly as

In activities that rarely compete with the hoopla of the Republican nominatina contest, Obama's campaign has placed a handful of paid staffers in each of several key states. They try to leverage their clout by recruiting and training scores of volunteers.

The volunteers, in turn, knock on doors, organize house parties and, above all, place phone calls to voters in hopes of identifying likely Obama supporters and tracking them through

Rick Perry shifts to the right in Iowa

RICHARD S. DUNHAM © 2011Hearst Newspapers **PEGGY FIKAC** INDIANOLA, lowa - As

Iowa's Republican presidential caucuses near and polls show Rick Perry languishing in fifth place, the Texas governor is making a last-ditch attempt to win support from the state's most conservative voters. In recent days, Perry has reversed his lifelong position on abortion, saying he no longer favors legal

abortions in cases of rape and incest – only when the mother's life is in imminent danaer.

And he has sent a signal to harsh critics of illegal immigration by campaigning alongside controversial Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio, an immigration hard-liner who

is under Justice Department investigation for alleged civil rights violations. "Perry is moving to the right because that is his only hope in Iowa,'' said Arthur B. Sanders, a political scientist at Drake University in Des Moines. "It is not clear these things will help, but they're unlikely to hurt and may provide a small benefit in Iowa.''

With Iowa's large number of social conservatives divided among former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, Minnesota congresswoman Michele Bachmann and Perry, the Texas governor is hoping to emerge as the primary recipient of Religious Right backing in the Jan. 3 caucuses. Analysts say Perry's shift on abortion – and his stepped-up criticism of his fellow conservatives in the GOP field – is part of an effort to vault into the top tier of presidential contenders. "A rightward strategy, Perry thinks, is where the votes are," said Steven E. Schier, a political scientist at Carleton College. "Perry wants to replicate Mike Huckabee's success in the 2008 lowa caucuses by becoming the leading candidate of social conservatives. If he can do that, he may prevail in (the) South Carolina (primary) and become the central competitor to Mitt Romney for the nomination.'

But polls show that Perry faces a daunting task. A new CNN/ORC poll of likely lowa caucus attendees showed Santorum surging ahead of Perry and Gingrich into third place with 16 percent support. Romney, a former Massachusetts governor and longtime Boston venture capitalist, holds a narrow lead over Texas Rep. Ron Paul, 25 percent to 22 percent. Perry was far back in fifth place at 11 percent, two points ahead of Bach-

Things are far bleaker for the Texas governor in New Hampshire, which holds its first-in-the-nation primary on Jan. 10.

The CNN/ORC poll released Wednesday placed Perry dead last at 2 percent in that state.

But Perry doesn't have time to worry about New Hampshire.



Romney, sensing opening, makes big push in lowa

CLINTON, lowa (AP) — Republican Mitt Romney is sensing an opening to win next Tuesday's lowa caucuses, and he's campaigning with increasing confidence — and a new crush of advertising — to bolster his closing argument: that he's the most electable candidate to challenge President Barack Obama in November.

A win in the first voting on the national road to the Republican nomination would help him in the next contest on Jan. 10, in New Hampshire, where the former Massachusetts governor's standing is strong.

"I just have to put my head down and battle as best I can," Romney said Wednesday.

Romney hasn't announced where he'll be on caucus night, leaving open the possibility that he may stay in lowa if victory is at hand. Support for former House of Representatives speaker — and former leader in the polls — Newt Gingrich is sliding after an onslaught of advertisements by a political action committee run by Romney's allies.

And while Romney is largely shying away from criticizing his rivals, he jabbed at Texas Rep. Ron Paul, who has emerged as Romney's chief rival in lowa despite some concerns over his isolationist views on foreign policy.

"One of the people running for president thinks it's OK for Iran to have a nuclear weapon," Romney said Wednesday. "I don't."

It is a far more aggressive strategy than the one Romney has employed all year. He poured \$10 million into the state in 2008, only to lose it in a defeat that crippled his campaign. He couldn't allay concerns about his Mormon faith or his reversals on some social issues in a state where evangelical Republicans and other social conservatives dominate.

Romney approached lowa more cautiously this time. Until recently, his lowa aides worked out of an attic on a slim budget. He spent less than \$200,000 on the state before the campaign started buying TV ads in December.

Paul's surge represents the



Supporters listen to Republican presidential candidate, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney as he speaks during a campaign stop at Homer's Deli and Bakery in Clinton, Iowa, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011. Mitt Romney is sensing an opening to win next Tuesday's Iowa caucuses, and he's campaigning with increasing confidence — and a new crush of advertising — to bolster his closing argument: that he's the most electable candidate to challenge President Barack Obama in November.

(AP Photo/Chris Carlson)

latest threat, and in some respects, the unlikeliest, coming from a man whose views on abortion, the war in Iraq, Iran and other issues are at odds with those of most Republicans.

At the same time, Paul's anti-government appeal appears to tap into the desire of a frustrated electorate for profound change in an era of high unemployment and an economy that has only slowly recovered from the recession.

Social conservatives remain splintered among a handful of candidates that include Texas Gov. Rick Perry, Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum.On Wednesday, a new CNN/TIME poll in Iowa showed Romney leading with 25 percent support.

US to pay family \$17.8M for military jet crash

san DIEGO (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday ordered the U.S. government to pay \$17.8 million to a Korean family that lost four members when a Marine Corps fighter jet crashed into their San Diego home in 2008.

U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Miller's ruling came after a nonjury trial between the Department of Justice and the family, who sought \$56 million for emotional and monetary loss. The Marine Corps blamed the crash on mechanical failure and human error

Don Yoon lost his 36-year-old wife, Youngmi Lee Yoon; his 15-month-old daughter, Grace; his 2-month-old daughter, Rachel; and his 59-year-old mother-in-law, Seokim Kim Lee, who was visiting from Korea to help her eldest

daughter take care of their children.

Yoon said in a statement that Miller's ruling was "thoughtful, reasoned and just." He broke down crying throughout his testimony, which came three years to the day after he buried his wife and girls in the same casket. He told the judge he only looks forward to the day when he can join them.

"Our family is relieved this part of the process is over, but no sum of money will ever make up for the loss of our loved ones," he said.

The Marine Corps has said the plane suffered a mechanical failure but a series of bad decisions led the pilot — a student — to bypass a potentially safe landing at a coastal Navy base after his engine failed on Dec. 8, 2008.



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Outrage after man's cat is euthanized over money

donors have threatened to pull their support for the Humane Society after it euthanized the cat of a former heroin addict because he couldn't immediately pay \$400 for its medical care.

The Arizona Republic newspaper reported that Daniel Dockery's 9-month-old cat, Scruffy, was put down because of the money issue, not because of cuts it got from a fence. Dockery said he reluctantly surrendered the cat to the Humane Society on Dec. 8 after staff declined to take a credit

the phone or wait 24 hours for her to wire him cash. They told him the cat would be treated only if he signed over ownership, he said.

searched for Dockerv the cat for three weeks at agency shelters and repeatedly asked staff what had happened. He learned Tuesday that the cat was euthanized a few hours after he brought her in. "Now I've got to think about how I failed that beautiful animal," Dockery said. "I failed her. ... That's so wrong. There was treated." Humane Society spokeswoman Stacy Pear-

PHOENIX (AP) — Outraged card from his mother over no reason for her not to be two of them. "It was never questions about the cat, intended for that cat to be euthanized," she said. "This



Daniel Dockery is pictured at his job in Phoenix, Ariz. Dockery's 9-month-old cat Scruffy, was euthanized recently by the Arizona Humane Society not because of her wounds but because Dockery couldn't immediately pay for her treatment. He had been searching for Scruffy for three weeks ago and learned of her fate Tuesday, Dec. 27. (AP Photo/The Arizona Republic, Charlie Leight)

son said the agency took the cat intending to treat it and put it in foster care, but when she was taken to a second-chance clinic with three other cats, doctors

were only available to treat

truly is a worst-case scenario ... and it is one the Arizona Humane Society must deal with every day."

Stacy Pearson, who was hired by the agency specifically to deal with media said Dockery's case has led to two changes. The Arizona Humane Society has set up an account, funded through donations, that would cover the costs of emergency treatment of animals whose owners need a day or two to come up with money for payments. And the group is now accepting credit card payments by phone, Pearson said. Dockery, a recovering heroin addict with a lengthy prison record, said Scruffy had been his closest companion and helped him stay off drugs.

Dockery's mother, Donna Koning, said she believes that when her son told the Humane Society workers that he didn't have a real job, they assumed he was homeless and couldn't care for an animal. "Don't you have enough animals in the shelter that you would not want to take a beloved pet from someone who clearly cares for it?" she asked.



US Congress frees \$40 million for Palestinians

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers have freed up a little more than 20 percent of \$187 million in U.S. assistance to the Palestinians that had been frozen over the Palestinian bid for U.N. membership.

Members of Congress have made available \$40 million in economic and humanitarian funding for the Palestinians, the State Department said Wednesday.

The money is administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development and "has been vital to establishing and strengthening the foundations necessary for a future Palestinian state," the department said.

The Obama administration had been urging lawmakers, with Israel's backing, to release the money as it contributes to Palestinian stability and Israeli security.

"It is in the interest of the Palestinians, Israel and the United States, to ensure these efforts continue," State Department spokesman Mark Toner said. "They help to build a more democratic, stable, and secure region." The administration is pressing Congress to release the remaining \$147 million that comes from the last budget cycle in which aid to the Palestinians was to total \$545.7 million.

New funding for the Palestinians will be subject to additional scrutiny and can be blocked if they win full admission to the United Nations before a peace deal with Israel is agreed.

The administration asked Congress for \$513.4 million in aid for the Palestinians in fiscal year 2012.



Protesters line up on a new stage

STEVEN YACCINO © 2011 New York Times

A Des Moines, Iowa, offshoot of the Occupy Wall Street protests has traded in tents for its own campaign office. A handwritten "Occupy the Caucus" sign hangs from the secondstory windows of an old brick storefront just blocks from the state Capitol. Organizers rented the office – \$1,500 for a one-week lease - expecting hundreds of Occupy demonstrators from across lowa and nearby states to gather and take advantage of the media presence here for the Jan. 3 caucuses.

"This week, more than ever, we have the national attention focused on the political leadership in this country," said Ed Fallon, 53, a former Democratic state representative, local radio host and organizer for Occupy Des Moines.

Inside the building, an old bar is stocked with coffee and bananas in place of liquor. There is a stage for open-mic events and news conferences. Upstairs, there is a "kid's center" with toys, as well as areas to host "civil disobedience training" and roundtable discussions.

hunkemöller



Jessica Reznicek and Greg Kemppainen look at a map of locations of campaian offices in the area, at the Occupy the Caucus office in Des Moines, Iowa, Dec. 28, of the Occupy Wall Street protests has traded in tents for its own campaign office, and is expecting hundreds of Occupy demonstrators states to gather and take advantage of the news media here for the Jan. 3 caucuses.

2011. The Des Moines offshoot from across lowa and nearby (Jim Wilson/The New York

cupy the Caucus recently released a statement saying it would not disrupt the statewide caucuses, focusing instead on candidates' events. And the stakes are high. With the Occupy movement in New England already planning to hold similar demonstrations before the New Hampshire primary Jan. 10, some at Occupy the Caucus are feeling the pressure to shape the tenor for other primaries and the general election. "The caucus sets the tone for the political race," said Nathan Davis, 31, who drove from Omaha with some friends to

Despite the name, Oc-



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Paseo Herencia Mall



North Koreans salute, cry for late leader Kim Jong

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — North Korea's next leader escorted his father's hearse in an elaborate state funeral on a bitter, snowy day Wednesday, bowing and saluting in front of tens of thousands of citizens who wailed and stamped their feet in grief for Kim Jong II.

Son and successor Kim Jong Un was head mourner on the gray day in Pyongyang, walking with one hand on the black hearse that carried his father's coffin on its roof, his other hand raised in salute, his head bowed against the wind.

At the end of the 2 1/2-hour procession, rifles fired 21 times as Kim Jong Un stood flanked by the top party and military officials who are expected to be his inner circle of advisers. Kim then saluted again as goosestepping soldiers carrying flags and rifles marched by.

Although analysts say Kim Jong Un is on the path toward cementing his power and all moves in North Korea so far — from titles giving him power over the ruling party and military and his leading position in the funeral procession — point in that direction, his age and inexperience leave questions about Kim's longterm prospects. Whereas his father was groomed for power for 20 years before taking over, the younger Kim has had only about two years.

He also faces the huge challenges of running a country that struggles to feed its people even as it pursues a nuclear weapons program that has earned it international sanctions and condemnation.

Kim Jong II — who led with absolute power after his father Kim II Sung's death in 1994, through a famine that

killed hundreds of thou- ing, stamping and crying sands and the pursuit of nuclear and missile programs coffin passed. Some strug-

as the convoy bearing his — died of a heart attack gled to get past security

Mourners cry during the funeral procession for late North Korean leader Kim Jong II, in Pyongyang, North Korea Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011.

(AP Photo/Kyodo News)

Dec. 17 at age 69. Mourners in parkas lined the streets of Pyongyang, wav-

personnel holding back the crowd.

"How can the sky not cry?" a weeping soldier standing in the snow said to state TV. "The people ... are all crying tears of blood."

The dramatic scenes of grief showed how effectively North Korea built a personality cult around Kim Jong II despite chronic food shortages and decades of economic hardship.

A large challenge for North

Korea's propaganda apparatus will be "to counter the public's perception that the new leader is a spoiled child of privilege," said Brian Myers, an expert on North Korean propaganda at Dongseo University in Busan, South Korea. "Having Kim Jong Un trudge mournfully next to the hearse in terrible weather was a very clever move," Myers said.

Even as North Koreans mourned the loss of the second leader the nation has known, the transition of power to Kim Jong Un was well under way. The young man, who is in his late 20s, is already being hailed by state media as the "supreme leader" of the party, state and army.

Kim wore a long, dark overcoat as he strode alongside his father's hearse accompanied by top party officials behind him and key military leaders on the other side of the limousine — a lineup that was a good look at who will be the core leadership in North Korea. North Korea now turns to Thursday's memorial ceremony. Although there will be tributes to Kim Jong II, the country will be turning toward Kim Jong Un, analysts said.







Libya ex-rebels sign up for government jobs

RAMI AL-SHAHEIBI Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — Hundreds of former Libyan rebels who helped topple Moammar Gadhafi were out applications Wednesday for jobs with the new government as a first step to disarmament, the interior minister said.

Fawzy Abdul-Ali told The Associated Press that former rebels will be asked to turn in their weapons after training and working with the government.

The uncontrolled ownership of weapons has been a major security concern since the end of the eight-month civil war that toppled Gadhafi in October. Rival revolutionary militias that remain armed have clashed repeatedly.

Abdul-Ali said former rebels will have until the end of January 2012 to apply for governments posts through local military councils distributing the applications.

Ibrahim al-Khamsy, 50, hoped that filling out an application will get him a job at an oil rig, like the one he had for 13 years. He also expects the new government to compensate him for the years he spent unemployed after Gadhafi regime officials fired him in 1990.

"I hope I can go back to my old job, but they have to count those years of experience... or give me a raise,"



Ali Tarhouni, center, a former instructor at the University of Washington business school who left to help lead the Libyan revolution, smiles following a news conference on the campus in Seattle. Hundreds of former Libyan rebels who helped topple Moammar Gadhafi were filling out applications Wednesday for jobs with the new government as a first step to disarmament, the interior minister said.

possess. It also asks them for personal information regarding their education, marital status and if they were wounded in the upris-

Rabie al-Aib, 31, a former rebel who became disabled during the fighting and is now unemployed hoped that filling out an application will help him get by a little easier.

"I want to get a job, and have a car and a house," he said, mirroring what several other former rebels wrote on their applications. Former fighters who are unemployed could receive a monthly stipend from the government until they find work, the interior minister

(AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

he said.

Although the application process was not scheduled to begin until January, several local councils began distributing the applications over the past day. Mohammed al-Shatewi, a member of one of Tripoli's military councils, said ex-rebels can apply to join the army, the Interior Ministry, a civil institution or to continue their education and study abroad. The applications ask former rebels what brigade they belong to, what their rank was during the uprising and the serial numbers of the weapons they



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Thursday Chateaubriand Night

Soup of the Night: Pumpkin Soup

Chef's Carving: Slow Roasted Beef Tenderloin • Béarnaise Sauce and Chimichuri Selected Entrees: Tilapia Fillet, White Wine Sauce - Roasted Turkey with Gravy -Braised Pork Bourguignon

Side Dishes: Pilaf Rice • Fettuccini with Escargot • Garlic Mashed Potatoes • Ratatouille



Friday Seafood Night

Soup of the Night: Seafood Chowder

Chef's Carving: Salmon Wellington, in Puff Pastry with White Fish Mousse & Spinach,

Selected Entrees: Grouper Fillet Creole • Seafood Newburg • Garlic Shrimp • Chicken Curry Side Dishes: Jasmine Rice • Penne Pasta in Clam Sauce • Vegetable Medley • Fried Plantain



Saturday Prime Rib Night

Soup of the Night: Onion Soup Chef Carved: Slow Roasted, USA Prime Rib, au Jus

Selected Entrees: Roasted Lamb Garlic & Herb • Stirfried Chicken • Cajun Fish Fillet,

Side Dishes: Baked Potatoes with Condiment • Macaroni & Cheese • Sautéed Green



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THE CINICALAC





Boxing trunk political ad overturns Mexican ballot

E. EDUARDO CASTILLO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's political season opened last month in the western state of Michoacan, where the country's former ruling party scored a string of victories seen as a sign of its rising strength nationwide.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party's candidate defeated the sister of Mexico's president in the Michoacan governor's race. It also won a series of local contests, bolstering widespread predictions that this summer the PRI will retake the presidency itself, Mexico's highest office, after 12 years out of power.

But the highly touted victories in Michoacan were in potential jeopardy Wednesday after Mexico's highest electoral court overturned one of them partly because of a strange new form of political advertising — a party logo emblazoned on a boxer's trunks

Mexican welterweight Juan Manuel Marquez



Mexico's Juan Manuel Marquez, left, wearing the emblem of the opposition Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, on his boxer's trunks is hit by Manny Pacquiao, right, of the Philippines, during a WBO welterweight title fight in Las Vegas. Mexico's highest electoral court says it has overturned a recent municipal election partly because of a strange new form of political advertising - a party logo emblazoned on a boxer's trunks.

(AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, file)

wore the PRI's green-whiteand-red emblem on the left leg of his shorts in his match last month against Filipino Manny Pacquiao in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Marquez lost the Nov. 12 bout, watched live by millions in Mexico. But after the PRI's victories in the next

day's elections, the ruling National Action Party complained that the logo had violated a temporary ban on campaigning ahead of the vote, as well as a prohibition on campaigning abroad. It asked for local and statewide races to be overturned.

The federal electoral tribunal ruled in the PAN's favor on Wednesday in the case of the race for mayor of Morelia, the capital of Michoacan.

The court did not immediately release an explanation of the reasoning behind its decision, which requires the Morelia race to be run again on an asyet-undetermined date over the next five months. But PAN officials said that they were hopeful that the same logic would apply to a pending decision on the governor's race.

The PAN and the leftist Democratic Revolution Party had also complained that Michoacan's powerful drug cartels had intimidated voters on behalf of the PRI. On the eve of the elections, one local cartel placed an advertisement in a newspaper in the town of La Piedad threatening citizens who voted for the PAN. President Felipe Calderon has said in several public addresses that organized crime helped defeat his sister, Luisa Maria Calderon,

and has described drug cartel meddling in elections as a potential national menace.

In addition, the PAN said in its complaint about the Morelia race that winning gubernatorial candidate Fausto Vallejo and Morelia mayoral candidate Wilfrido Lazaro had made unauthorized appearances on television to announce the end of their campaigns.

A high-ranking PAN official, Juan Molinar Horcasitas, said the party had made the same arguments in its appeal of the governor's race, and expected another victory in court.

"According to the law, in the same circumstances the same decision should be taken," he said. "It seems to me that, as a result, the electoral tribunal should annul the governor's race."

A new vote would be highly competitive and almost certain to draw in the national resources of the governing party, the PRI and the PRD in what could become a proxy presidential race.









Greek PM pledges 150,000 new jobs in 2012



People queue at a tax office during the last working day of the year in northern Athens, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011. Tax office employees will hold a 48-hour strike on Thursday and Friday against planned pay cuts and the implementation of a new emergency property tax. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greece's interim coalition government pledged Wednesday to create 150,000 new jobs in the first quarter of 2012 and boost welfare programs, seeking to alleviate the effects of an acute financial crisis that has sent unemployment soaring amid a deep recession.

Prime Minister Lucas Papademos said the Orthodox Church of Greece and local authorities would be involved in the twin effort, set to cost nearly €900 million (\$1.17 billion).

"The crisis and unemployment have hurt thousands of families that are undergoing sore trials, particularly at this time of year," Papademos said after a cabinet meeting attended by Church leader Archbishop Hieronymos. "It is our duty to support them and strengthen social solidarity."

After years of government overspending created an

unsustainable public debt, Greece was saved from bankruptcy in 2010 with a €110 billion (\$144 billion) international bailout program. In return for the rescue loans, the previous Socialist government imposed harsh austerity measures, slashing pensions and salaries while increasing taxes and retirement ages.

But the cutbacks deepened the recession, with the economy heading for a fourth year of contraction in 2012, and sent unemployment to a near-record high of 17.5 percent in September — with more than 850,000 people left jobless. The new job creation drive will mainly involve community work, while local authorities will be given funds to hire unemployed workers - including 5,000 people aged 55-64.

Papademos heads a coalition of the majority Socialists, conservative New Democracy and a small nationalist party. His government, formed last month after two weeks of political turmoil, has a mandate to approve a new €130 billion international bailout, implement delayed reforms and negotiate a €100 billion writedown of the country's privately held debt.

On Wednesday, government spokesman Pantelis Kapsis said the coalition's mandate would be extended from mid-February to the end of March, to allow conclusion of the debt writedown talks.

In an embarrassment to the government earlier Wednesday, the two prosecutors heading the judicial task force charged with fighting tax evasion resigned, claiming they were being sidelined.

Grigoris Peponis and Spiros Mouzakitis said the government was "attempting to replace and get rid of" them with a new draft law that would appoint a high stead.

The finance and justice ministries said the draft plan for the prosecutors' replacement was meant to im-

court prosecutor in their prove the task force's functioning.

> Tax evasion is rampant in Greece, despite successive government pledges to fight it.



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Tom Cruise Jeremy Renner



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Matt Damon Scarlett Johansson

We Bought A

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Daniel Craig Simon Pegg THE ADVENTURES OF

3D with Spanish Subtitles

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Halle Berry Ashton Kutcher

NEW YEAR'S **EVE**

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STARTING NEXT WEEK JANUARY 5 SHERLOCK HOLMES 2



USVI to lay off nearly 500 amid budget crisis

CHARLOTTE AMALIE, U.S. Virgin Islands (AP) — The governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands says he will be forced to lay off nearly 500 employees in the coming months because of a fiscal crisis.

Gov. John de Jongh said Wednesday that 143 tem-

porary and part-time workers will be dismissed on Dec. 30, and that another 350 workers will receive dismissal letters on Jan. 5.

The governor blamed legislators for the dismissals, saying they have rejected other proposals including wage cuts to offset a budaet crisis.

De Jongh warned that additional layoffs might be needed

The U.S. Caribbean territory faces a \$17.4 million deficit this year and an estimated \$90 million deficit next year.

A year of acquired tastes

© 2011 New York Times

No doubt about it, I've had the privilege of drinking some spectacular wines in 2011. Most astounding of all was a summer evening that I spent with the sort of areat old Burgundies that I never imagined I would see in the first place and that I never expect to drink again.

Yet, as crazy as that lineup of wines was, what I remember most in 2011 were the wines that surprised me, arabbed me and shook me up. Not just wines, in fact, but beers and spirits, too. The French call this feeling of being knocked backward in unexpected rapture a coup de coeur. I call it falling in love.

It happened in France this summer, when I was visiting the Aube region of Champagne, long considered the boiler-room grape-supplier to the glamorous Marne, where the vast amount of bubbly is produced. Yet the Aube is proving that it, too, can make wonderfully distinctive Champagnes. If I hadn't known

this before, I would have sparkling wines from Ridbeen convinced after visiting Dominique Moreau, lage of Ditchling, and from

geview Estate near the vil-



FILE -- Dominique Moreau, who makes Champagne under the Marie Courtin label, at her vineyard in Troves, France, This year in wine produced memorable characters and experiences. (Nigel Dickinson for The New York Times)

who makes tiny amounts of Champagne under the Marie-Courtin label that are gorgeous, precise and elegant, and that I cannot get out of my head.

Even more unlikely than great Champagne from the Aube is the notion of good wine of any kind from England. But that's exactly what I found in southern England last spring. The



Single malt whiskey from the island of Islay, off the coast of Scotland, is swirled in a glass during a tasting in New York. This year produced memorable characters and experiences with alcohol.

(Ozier Muhammad/The New York Times)

Ravines Wine Cellars' Rieslings, from the Finger Lakes, on Keuka Lake in Hammondsport, New York. (Nathaniel Brooks/The New York Times)

ers, are superb and will forever put to rest the notion that England is not capable of making good wine. Best of all, Ridgeview's sparklers may soon be available on U.S. shores. I can't seem to get away from bubbly, but I would be remiss not to mention the numerous times this year that I've enjoyed Blonde, Andrea Calek's unconventionally delicious sparkling blend of chardonnay and viognier from the Ardeche. I've been lucky enough to see it in several restaurants. It never tastes the same way twice, but always delights. Last winter, I wrote about drinking roses out of season, motivated in part by a wonderful rose from Domaine llarria of Irouleguy

a handful of other produc-

joyed the dry, complex, minerally Zind Humbrech Clos Hauserer.

southwestern France. This

wine, which I described as

tasting like liquid rock com-

bined with blood and iron,

dumbfounded me. It was

so good! I've been looking

for it fruitlessly ever since, as

it seems to have lost its East

Coast distributor. If you see

It's been a few years since

I've sought out wines from

Alsace - they've too often

been big, ungainly and

unexpectedly sweet. But

a wine panel tasting of Al-

sace rieslings reminded

me of how beautiful these

wines could be, especially

from a taut vintage like

2008. I've especially en-

it, let me know.

Closer to home, the leap in quality in the last decade of Finger Lakes rieslings has been wonderful to behold. Of the many superb producers, like Hermann J. Wiemer, Anthony Road and Red Tail Ridge, New York rieslings don't come any better than those from Ravines. Relax, red wine fans, I'll get to you soon enough. One more white to go, a surprise not because I didn't expect to be wowed by Coche-Dury, one of the most renowned producers of white Burgundy, but because the vintage, 2005, has not been one of my favorites. But there we were, in a restaurant in a small French town, unexpectedly confronted

in the Basque country of on the wine list with a Coche Meursault Rougeots '05, at a reasonable price, although still a splurge. Rougeots is a village wine, not even a premier cru, yet in the glass this showed a jawdropping complexity. The meal ground to a halt as I contemplated this wine, certainly the most profound of the younger wines.

Wines like that are rare, and rightfully so. Less exalted but no less satisfying in the proper context are bottles like the Teroldego Rotaliano, a fresh, lively red from Trentino, Italy, rescued from obscurity by Elisabetta Foradori. She's not the only one who produces it, however. I also love the delicious, savory version from the Tyrolean producer Nusserhof. What about Priorat, in the hills of Catalonia? Sure, some of these wines are big, oaky and overly dense, but at their best, as with the 2005 Mas La Mola or the 2007 Clos Mogador, the standouts of last winter's Priorat tasting, they can be intense and full of savory mineral flavors.

Wine does tend to dominate my time, but I always have room for beer, like the Kolsches, which I certainly enjoyed in the summer, but haven't stopped drinking yet, and a benchmark beer, like the Cantil-Ion Classic Gueuze, a tart, bright, funky brew that was among the stars of our sour beer tasting.

Spirits? I had an opportunity this year to drink one of the rarest and most astonishing mezcals of all, the unbelievably complex Del Maguey Pechuga, produced (I'm not making this up) with the addition of a chicken breast. After that, the fragrant, earthy, canefresh rhums agricoles of the French West Indies might seem rather tame, but try, say, La Favorite Ambre from Martinique and tell me it isn't gorgeous in its own right. For that matter, a recent tasting of the moody, contemplative Islay single malts was a reminder that these may be the greatest whiskies of all.



LUGAL TODAY



Riba is on the look-out for friends and family members

We would like to introduce Riba to you, one of the donkeys living at the Aruban Donkey Sanctuary. She came to the sanctuary in 2008: the volunteers received a phone call that a baby donkey had been hit by a car at Kas Ariba. Once there the volunteers could capture the mother as well as her offspring. First of all, the little one received aid and was taken to the sanctuary.

When the volunteers went back for the mother, however, she had vanished together with the gate she had been tied to. The little donkey was baptized Riba, referring to the location where she was found. The vet was called and he diagnosed a fracture, just beneath the hip bone. An operation was not an option, so the leg had to heal by itself. Fortunately, this went according to plan. Although Riba still has a crooked hind leg, she is not suffering at all.

She is frolicking the days away together with her friend Storm, having the time of her life. This beautiful donkey has been provided with a chip, just like all the other donkeys. On the chip is information about the donkey and its medical history. The donkeys at the sanctuary have a lot of friends with whom they can play all day long.

Karel Yrausquin Honored at Caribbean Palm Village



Noord -- Caribbean Palm Village Resort recently honored its night auditor Karel Yrausquin, for 10 years of loyal service to the company. Popular among owners, guests and staff members Karel may be proud of his perfect employment record during the past five years, as he has never called in sick, and never missed a day's work. By his own admission he likes taking care of his guests and feels at home at the resort. With Karel in charge afterhours, the resort is in good, capable hands, as Karel easily rises to any challenge.

Because he works most nights, he fishes, cooks, plays the guitar, records and listens to music, during the day, then goes to work when most people come home. Happily married to Helen his wife for the past 31 years, the Yrausquin shared the pleasure of raising one Management and staff wish to congratulate Karel and thank him for his loyal support of the resort celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

Pictured here with Karel, management and board representatives, Astrid Muller and Randy Croes.

Adorn Thyself The Caribbean Queen Now Open at the Palm Beach Plaza Mall

Palm Beach – The muchanticipated Caribbean Queen store opened just recently at the Palm Beach Plaza, conceived and conceptualized by Jodi Tobman of the Salamander Group with her talented crew of retail specialists.

The store, on the mall's first floor boasts a true Caribbean atmosphere, reflected on its polished wooden floors, antique colonial furnishings with gingerbread trim, and specially painted walls reminiscent of typical Antillean landhuizen.

The store honors all daughters of the soil, the island's genuine Caribbean Queens who are beautiful inside and outside. By Tradition, Caribbean women have always adorned themselves with colorful scarves, flowers and jewels, and decorated their home



with lace, shells, and homemade artifacts, choosing colors which echo the region's joy of life. That joy of life is palpable in the store as visitors who enter are immediately immersed in beauty. True to the store's credo Adorn Thyself, women will find a great selection of jewelry, bags, totes and clutches, hats, hair ornaments and ascessories, belts, animal print umbrellas, headbands, and the latest, cute fascinators, those classy, lacy and feathery head coverings, perfect for New Year's Eve or Carnival. The store will also be honoring a monthly Caribbean Queen a local artisan who lives and creates here. For the month of December, it's Carina Molina with Upcycled Design, bags, belts and jewelry made from discarded rubber inner tubes.

Yes, old tires receive a second lease on life at the hands of Molina who presents her fresh and innovative collection at Caribbean Queen.

Visit the store at the Palm Beach Plaza Mall, and enjoy the unusual décor and unique merchandise. The store will be fund-raising for three local art foundations via its repair of the world, Tikkun Olam program, designating a percentage of every purchase to The Aruba International Arts Foundation, AIAF, supporting local artists, or the Pancake Gallery, offering summer art courses to youths, or Ateliers' 89, an art school and studio for adults.

Caribbean Queen offers gift-certificates in all denominations, which can never expire! Visit soon and Adorn Thyself.



Goodwill Ambassador Bob celebrates birthday on Aruba





EAGLE BEACH - Bob Ruth has been visiting Aruba for 20

nized by the Government of Aruba as a Goodwill Amyears and has been recog-bassador to the island for



his consecutive visits and loyalty. Many of La Cabana's timeshare owners are his referrals. Bob comes 2 to 3 times a year from Harrisburg, Penn and all of his neighbors and business associates come to Aruba because of him. He is the owner of Bob Ruth Ford dealerships and he has so many friends on the island, everybody knows Bob. Bob and his wife Michelle are Gilycia Senchi's godparents, the young daughter of local artist Gilbert Senchi. Bob and Michelle usually travel with their children Stephany, Justin and Zack - they are truly One Happy Family enjoying One Happy Island.

Bob is pictured with some of his island friends enjoying some of his most favorite nightlife places on Aruba including the Screaming





Restaurant-Lounge where they enjoyed Chef Christmas ute seared reindeer and then later to Soprano's where everyone sang in honor of Bob's Big Birthday celebration on Aruba.

After several weeks at the home-away-from-home at La Cabana, Bob and his family will return today back to the mainland. Best wishes from all your friends on Aruba and come back

Mrs. Therese Martin wins \$2,262 at the Aura Casino





PALM BEACH - Mrs.Therese Martin discovered her lucky streak in the newly renovated Aura Casino "where players win". She won a total amount of \$2.262,- at the Aura Casino at the Occidental Grand while playing on the brand new slot machines! Mrs.Martin is visiting Aruba for a week with her husband and is staying in The Occidental Grand Hotel. The management and staff of the Aura Casino want to wish Mrs.Martin congratulations on her great win on the slotmachine "Mariachi Riches" The center of Aruba has definitely shifted here at the Aura Casino, which happens to be smackdab in the middle of all the action on Palm Beach. Come and try your luck, maybe you can be one of Aura Casino's next lucky winners!



Caribbean Palm Village Hosts a Yearend Award Ceremony and Party















The gathering of staff and members of management at Scabeche Restaurant honored 60 years of hotel experience as shared by five staffers: Gina Tondu, Operations Manager and Mary Werleman, HR Manager, both concluding 15 years of service at the resort and Karel Yrausquin, night auditor, Hyacintho Henriques, and George Yrausquin, each celebrating 10 years of service.

Among the nominees for the Employee of the 4th Quarter Award were tireless Franklin Oduber, Maintenance, Jean Michel Philemon, Housekeeping, Meredith Wouters, Accounting, Deborah Rasmijn, Front Desk, and Sadia Futa, Reservations.

Franklin Oduber, outshone all other by his outstanding work, and he was rewarded by his peers with a great round of applause. The Extra Mile Award went to Kenyah Howell, Front Desk.

Front Desk star Debbie Rasmijn, won the Employee of the Year award. Debbie who works as a Night Auditor and a Front Desk Agent is always willing and ready to help, above and beyond the call of duty.



Her efforts and dedication were rewarded as she received her coveted award, escorted by gifts from the General Manager and the Operations Manager.

The shining stars of the year, other recipients of honors were Sadia Futa, Reservations and Joalis Kelly, Housekeeping, lauded for their outstanding performance during 2011.

The party at Scabeche boasted a friendly, muchenjoyed ambiance, as staff and members of management experienced friendship, great food and beverages in the spirit of the season.

Board Treasurer Randolph Croes and General Manager Astrid Muller thanked everyone for their hard work, dedication and loyalty and extended their wishes for Happy Holidays and a successful 2012, to all party attendees.

Santa made an appearance at the end of the party, sharing many gifts as well as raffles and surprises. The Caribbean Palm Village Resort boats 170 deluxe accommodations, set amidst lush tropical gardens. The resort is celebrating its 2th anniversary this year.





Go Kart Racing while on Vacation!

BUSHIRI - Many have discovered the place for the ultimate thrill while on vacation,

which is Bushiri Karting Speedway, a great outdoor Go karting Track with fast rental Go karts available for anyone to rent.

The place is surrounded with great ambiance and racing fans can challenge each other any day. Since Bushiri Karting Speedway opened their doors for everyone to enjoy the sport of go karting with 16 available 4stroke go karts to rent all year round and also the facility that anyone can have fun and enjoy with the whole family.

A place where children







and grownups can enjoy a little speed on vacation! Each race is a 10 minute race against the clock. You can receive a score sheet to take home after every race to see what your best lap time was.



The score sheet can give you bragging rights to your friends back home so they can see how well you raced on a professional outdoor karting track in Aruba! Those who would like to race can call for reservations at 583-5278 or pass by at the track for an arrive and drive session open daily from 10am-6:30 pm.

No plans yet for New Year's Eve?

Salt & Pepper has plans for you to ring in 2012!



PALM BEACH - For those who like to keep their options open regarding the festivities surrounding New Year's Eve, here is a thought: for

the first time Salt & Pepper Tapas Bar and Restaurant will be open to help you see in the New Year in a fun way until the wee hours of the morning. The plan is to start with a special Happy Hour at 10 pm; this Happy Hour, which will continue until closing time, entails that premium drinks cost just. A great deejay will be playing from 11 – 2 am, so don't forget to put on your dancing shoes.

Groups of more than four people are requested to reserve a table for the final evening of the year. The kitchen will be closed at 10 pm, so come a bit earlier if you want to have a bite first. The staff of Salt & Pepper, located in the Arawak Garden across from the Occidental Resort, is looking forward to making New Year's Eve a fantastic happening, which people will remember for a long time to come. Come and celebrate the 31st at



Salt & Pepper: you'll love it \square

Pens register 52 shots, beat 'Canes 4-2

Pittsburgh Penguins' Jordan Staal (11) skates next to his brother Eric Staal, of the Carolina Hurricanes, in the first period of an NHL hockey game in Pittsburgh on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2011. The Penguins won 4-2, with Jordan Staal getting a goal in his 400th NHL game.

Associated Press Page 18







In this Sept. 11, 2011, photo, Baltimore Ravens line-backer Ray Lewis reacts during an NFL football game against the Pittsburgh Steelers in Baltimore. Lewis is one of seven Ravens named to the Pro Bowl on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2011.

Associated Press

Patriots, 49ers lead Pro Bowl rosters

By BARRY WILNER

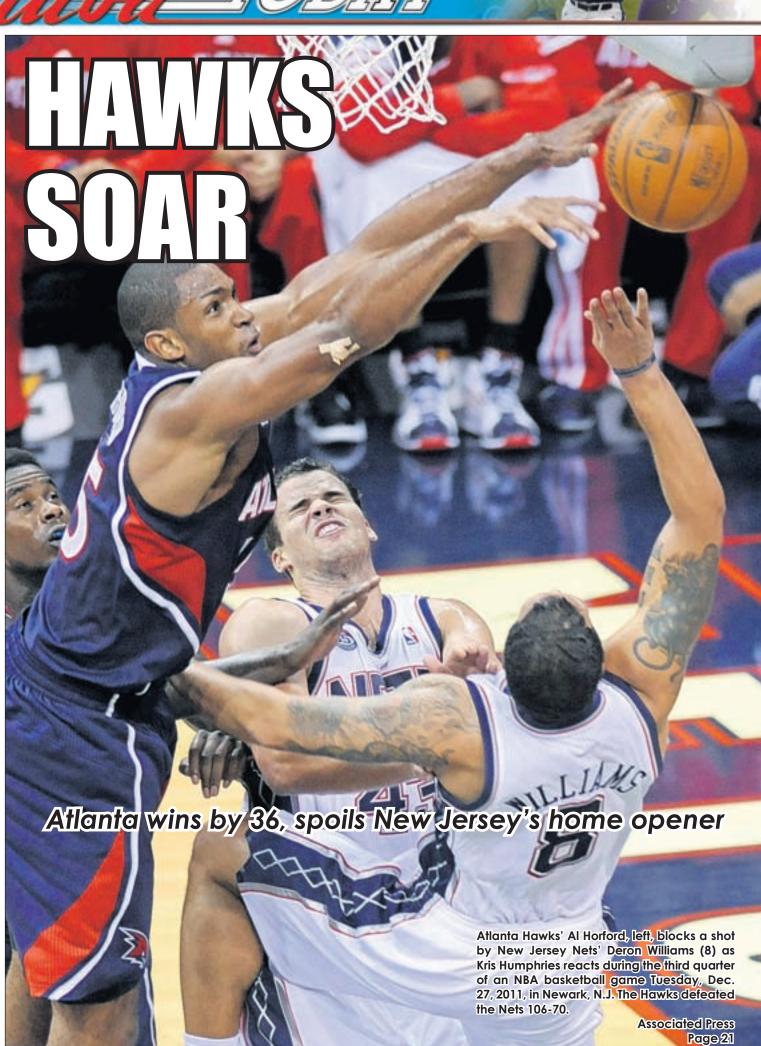
NEW YORK (AP) — The usual names — Tom Brady, Ray Lewis,Troy Polamalu, Tony Gonzalez — are headed for Hawaii, barring a trip to the Super Bowl.

Joining them at the Pro Bowl will be the not quite so familiar, fromRob Gronkowski to Jimmy Graham, from Marshal Yanda to Earl Thomas.

The thrill is equal, whether it's eight-time invitee Ed Reed or hisBaltimore Ravens teammate, newcomer Yanda.

"I am ecstatic, that is really the only thing I can say," said Yanda, a backup at guard to New England's Logan Mankins and Brian Water. "This is such a great honor, something that I never really expected.

Continued on Page 20



NHL Roundup

Red Wings rally late to edge Blues

DETROIT (AP) — Detroit's Pavel Datsyuk and Niklas Kronwall scored just 56 seconds apart in the third period to give the Red Wings a 3-2 comeback win over St. Louis on Tuesday, lifting them over the Blues in the NHL Central Division standings.

Datsyuk tied the game 2-2 with 8:41 left, deflecting White's shot out of the air for his 12th goal of the sea-

Kronwall netted his eighth with a wrist shot from the left point with 7:45 remain-

Nicklas Lidstrom also scored for Detroit, which won its 11th consecutive home game.

Matt D'Agostini and Alexander Steen scored for St. Louis.

PANTHERS 5, MAPLE LEAFS 3

In Sunrise, Florida, Kris Versteeg and Jason Garrison scored power-play goals to help Florida beat Toronto.

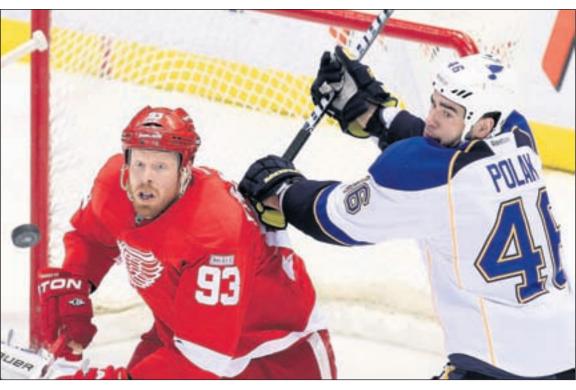
Gundbranson, Bill Thomas, and Tomas Fleischmann also scored for the Panthers, who snapped a three-game losing skid.

Mikhail Grabovski scored twice, and captain Dion Phaneuf added one for the Maple Leafs.

Florida was 2 for 3 on the power play. Toronto was 1 for 4.

LIGHTNING 5. FLYERS 1

In Tampa, Steven Stamkos



Detroit Red Wings right wing Johan Franzen (93) and St. Louis Blues defenseman Roman Polak (46) watch the puck in front of the Blues net during the second period of an NHL hockey game in Detroit, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2011.

Associated Press

had two goals in Tampa Bav's comfortable win over Philadelphia.

The Lightning went ahead 2-1 on Stamkos' rebound backhand at 7:25 of the second. After Steve Downie scored at 11:41, Stamkos tied for the NHL lead with his 22nd goal, making it 4-1 with 1:15 remaining in the second.

Mathieu Garon made 31 saves, while Bruno Gervais and Vincent Lecavalier also had goals for the Lightning, who lost defenseman Victor Hedman in the first period to an undisclosed upper body injury.

Scott Hartnell scored for Philadelphia, which was outshot 32-16.

PENGUINS 4, HURRICANES 2 In Pittsburgh, the hosts fired a barrage of shots at Carolina goalie Justin Peters before finally breaking him in a victory over Carolina that stretched Pittsburgh's winning streak to four games. James Neal notched his 21st goal of the season, one behind the NHL leaders. He has 14 goals in 16 home Pittsburgh outshot Carolina 52-18, giving Peters a difficult test in his season de-

Peters finished with 48 saves, including 36 on the first 37 shots he faced.

Steve Sullivan gave Pittsburgh the lead early in the third, and Pascal Dupuis scored 70 seconds later for the Penguins. Jordan Staal added a goal.

Tim Brent and Tuomo Ruutu scored for the Hurricanes.

CANADIENS 6, SENATORS 2 In Ottawa, Michael Cammalleri, Tomas Plekanec, Louis Leblanc, P.K. Subban and Erik Cole each had a goal and an assist as Montreal halted a five-game losing skid with a win over Ottawa.

Lars Eller scored his second short-handed goal of the season for Montreal, which gave interim coach Randy Cunneyworth his first NHL win in five tries. Zack Smith gave the Senators a 1-0 lead and Jason Spezza added a late con-

In other NHL games Calgary 2, Columbus 1, SO; Pittsburgh 4, Carolina 2; Montreal 6, Ottawa 2; Tampa Bay 5, Philadelphia 1; Florida 5, Toronto 3; Detroit

solation.

Winnipeg 4, Colorado 1.

A's trade Bailey, **Sweeney** to Red Sox

Anuba___TODAY

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — A person with knowledge of the negotiations says the Oakland Athleticshave agreed to trade All-Star closer Andrew Bailey and outfielder Ryan Sweeney to the Boston Red Sox for outfielder Josh Reddick and prospects Miles Head and Raul Alcantara.

The person confirmed the deal, first reported by ESPN on Wednesday, to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because final details are still being worked out before a formal announcement from the clubs.

Bailey becomes the fourth key pitcher traded this month for the rebuilding A's, who dealt starter Trevor Cahill and reliever Craig Breslow to the Arizona Diamondbacks on Dec. 9 and then sent Gio Gonzalez to Washington last Thursday.

The 24-year-old Reddick batted .280 with seven homers and 28 RBIs in 87 games for Boston in 2011.

James Blake out of **Australian** Open MELBOURNE. **Australia**

(AP) — Tournament direcof 2012.

Tiley announced the 59thranked American's withdrawal in a Twitter post on Wednesday but provided

James Blake has withdrawn from the AO and Brisbane. Sorry to hear this and we wish James all the best."

Earlier, the Courier Mail bane International tournafor "personal reasons."

tor Craig Tiley says James Blake has withdrawn from next month's Australian Open, the first grand slam

no explanation. He said "just got word that

newspaper reported Blake had pulled out of the Brisment, which starts Monday,

The Australian Open begins

A-Rod fine after treatment on knee, shoulder

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Yankees say star third baseman Alex Rodriguez is totally fine after having special treatment on his right knee and left shoulder in Germany earlier this month. The 36-year-old Rodriguez had plasma-rich platelet injections following a recommendation from Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant. Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said Wednesday that the team gave its permission after vetting the process.

Rodriquez's treatment was first reported by the New York Post.

Cashman says the therapy is in "complete compli-

ance" with WADA and Major League Baseballregulations. He also said the treatment is performed in the United States. The Yankees say Rodriguez went to the doctor in Germany because he's at the top of this field

Rodriguez had surgery on his right knee last July and saw his power drop in the second half and postseason. He played in 99 games and hit 16 home runs. He has 629 career homers.

Cashman says Rodriguez is "100 percent" right now and that there are "no red flags" going into spring training. Cashman says he expects Rodriguez to be



The Yankees also said they've reached agree-37-year-old with lefty Hideki Okajima for a nonroster invite to spring training. Once a staple of the Boston bullpen, he spent most of last year in Triple-A for the Red Sox. The

Yankees envision him as a

possible lefty specialist.

3. St. Louis 2: and



N.Carolina State narrowly wins Belk Bowl

CHARLOTTE, North Caro- Louisville **lina (AP)** — North Carolina State quarterback Mike Glennon threw for 264 yards and three touchdowns as the Wolfpack held off a late Louisville charge to win college football's Belk Bowl 31-24 on Tuesday.

David Amerson returned an interception 65 yards for a touchdown, and had two more pickoffs to give him 13 for the season, the most in the country, while setting a new Atlantic Coast Conference record.

T.J. Graham made the most of his final game at N.C. State with seven catches for 116 yards and two touchdowns, including a 65-yard score on a nifty catch-and-run, as the Wolfpack (8-5) overcame a series of special teams blunders to win narTeddy Bridgewater, who threw for 274 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another, nearly brought the Cardinals back from a 21-point deficit, but his final heave on fourth-and-23 was picked off by Amerson with 41 seconds left.

*LITTLE CAESARS BOWL

In Detroit, Purdue recovered two onside kicks and held on to beat Western Michigan 37-32 in the Little Caesars Bowl.

Raheem Mostert returned a kickoff 99 yards for a touchdown before halftime to give Purdue a big lead but the Boilermakers struggled to hold off the hard-finishing Broncos.

Western Michigan had the ball with a chance to go ahead, but their comeback hopes ended when



quarterback Alex Carder fumbled for his fifth turnover of the game with just under 2 minutes left.

The Boilermakers (7-6) led 27-15 at halftime after third-string running back pass to Jordan White and

Reggie Pegram scored the first two touchdowns of his career.

The Broncos (7-6) scored first on Carder's 49-yard

went back ahead midway through the second quarter.

Mostert returned the ensuing kickoff for a TD to put Purdue ahead for good.

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Thursday, December 29, 2011 SPORTS

Pro Bowl

Continued from Page 17

When I made it to the NFL, I was so happy to be on a team and playing in the league, and now, to be a part of a Pro Bowl team is something very special."

Or as old hand safety Reed put it Tuesday, "It is definitely an honor and blessing. To come back after an injury last year and to be voted by my peers and fans is special."

There are seven Ravens on the AFC squad, equaling the number of Green Bay Packers for the NFC. But they didn't lead their conferences in voting by players, coaches and fans.

Brady is one of eight Patriots and Patrick Willis one of eight 49ers to make the Jan. 29 game.

"It's awesome," said 49ers punter Andy Lee, one of four Bay Area kickers to make it.

"I think everybody is deserving. I think some guys are deserving who aren't going. Hopefully we won't be there, hopefully we'll be in the Super Bowl."

Players who make the Super Bowl will be replaced on the Pro Bowl rosters.

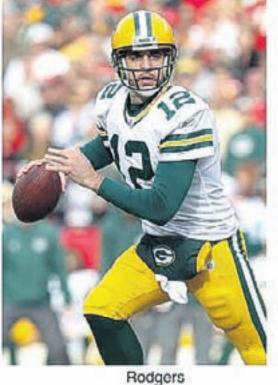
Still, it's a sunny, balmy consolation prize to journey to Honolulu.

"It's a nice honor," Texans running back Arian Foster said. "People that love watching the game, people that love playing it and also coaches that have been around it for 20-someodd years ... it's the highest compliment you can get in this league is when you're voted in by people who know the game. It's just fun."

Brady is one of seven starters from New England (12-3). The others are receiver Wes Welker, tight end Gronkowski, defensive tackle Vince Wilfork, defensive end Andre Carter, Waters and Logan Mankins. Special-teamer Matthew Slater is the other New England representative.

Linebacker Willis, defensive end Justin Smith, cornerback Carlos Rogers and tackle Joe Staley will start for the NFC from the 49ers (12-3), who had only Smith and Willis make the Pro Bowl last year.







In this Dec. 11, 2011, file photo, Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver A.J. Green catches a pass against Houston Texans cornerback Johnathan Joseph (24) during an NFL football game in Cincinnati. Green didn't think he'd make the ProBowl as a rookie. His incredible catches were too much to ignore. The first-round draft pick is one of three rookies to be voted to the Pro Bowl. Associated Press

Green Bay's Rodgers is the starting NFC quarterback, backed by record-setting Drew Brees of New Orleans (12-3).

"It does have special significance, because when I was voted in in 2009, I was the third guy and I was very thankful to be voted in, and got the opportunity to start because of some injuries and guys not going," Rodgers said.

"It's great to be voted in as a starter, that means a lot to me and it's a special honor."

Four of the NFL's biggest headline makers this season did not get voted in by players, coaches and fans: Lions defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh, Steelers linebacker James Harrison, Panthers rookie quarterback Cam Newton, and Denver quarterback Tim Tebow.

Suh might have lost support after drawing a two-game suspension for stomping an opponent, and Harrison's one-game suspension for his helmet-to-helmet hit on Browns quarterback Colt McCoy might have reduced his support.

Fifteen first-time Pro Bowl selections made the NFC squad, including Rogers, Staley and safety Dashon Goldson of the 49ers. Thirteen AFC players were first-time selections, including Gronkowski, Carter and Slater of New England. Carter is on injured reserve (left quadriceps) and won't play.

"If you look around the NFC, you see a ton of amazing

and talented players at tight end," said the Saints' Graham, the starter at the position and a first-time Pro Bowl player. "And to be thought of in that company by my peers, the head coaches and the fans who follow the NFL is something I take seriously."

Fourteen teams from each conference were represented, with St. Louis (2-13) and Washington (5-10) drawing blanks in the NFC, Buffalo (6-9) and Tennessee (8-7) shut out in the AFC. Pittsburgh (11-4), New Or-

Pittsburgh (11-4), New Orleans and Chicago (7-8) each had five representatives.

Three rookies were chosen: Denver linebacker Von Miller, Cincinnati receiver A.J. Green, and Arizona cornerback Patrick Peterson, selected as a kick return specialist. He has tied an NFL record with four punt runbacks for TDs this season.

"As I've said before, A.J. is the best first-round draft pick that I've ever been around," Bengals coach Marvin Lewis said. "He has shown the other players in this league, and the fans, that he deserved this honor. I have not seen a receiver better than he is at getting to the ball."

NFC special-teamers included two 49ers: Lee and record-setting kicker David Akers; Peterson; and Corey Graham of Chicago.

For the AFC, the Raiders' Sebastian Janikowski is the kicker, Shane Lechler the punter. The kick return spe-

cialist is Pittsburgh WR Antonio Brown, and the specialteams player is Slater.

NFC starters will be Rodgers, Eagles running back LeSean McCoy, Packers fullback John Kuhn, Graham, Panthers center Ryan Kalil, Saints guards Jahri Evans and Carl Nicks, Eagles tackle Jason Peters and Staley, Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald and Lions wide receiver Calvin Johnson on offense.

"I think it's the fact that I'm versatile at fullback," Kuhn said when asked why he was selected. "I can play the traditional fullback role and lead block, and the coaches also entrust the ball-carrying opportunities that I have. I think the combination of the two of those really gets my name out there."

On defense, it will be Vikings end Jared Allen and Eagles end Jason Babin, Cowboys tackle Jay Ratliff and Smith, Packers outside linebacker Clay Matthews and Cowboys outside linebacker DeMarcus Ware, inside linebacker Willis, Packers cornerback Charles Woodson and Rogers, Seahawks safety Earl Thomas and Cardinals safety Adrian Wilson.

AFC starters will be Brady, Ravens running back Ray Rice and fullback Vonta Leach, Gronkowski, Steelers center Maurkice Pouncey, Mankins and Waters at guard, Browns tackles Joe Thomas and Dolphins tackle Jake Long, Welker and Steelers wide receiver Mike Wallace.

On defense, it will be Broncos end Elvis Dumervil replacing Carter, Colts end Dwight Freeney, Wilfork and Ravens tackle Haloti Ngata, Miller and Ravens outside linebacker Terrell Suggs, Lewis, Jets cornerback Darrelle Revis and Broncos cornerback Champ Bailey, Steelers safety Troy Polamalu and Reed

"What makes it special to me now is I'm in my 13th year, and you don't see guys going to the Pro Bowl this late in their career," Bailey said. "For me to be able to do it, it feels good, and it feels like I've got a lot more left. It feels good that I'm still playing at a high level."





Heat staggers home against Celtics 115-107



Los Angeles Lakers guard Steve Blake, center, shoots between Utah Jazz forwards Paul Millsap, left, and Enes Kanter (0), of Turkey, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2011. Lakers won the game 96-71.

MIAMI (AP) — The Miami Heat nearly blew a 20-point lead before hanging on to edge the Boston Celtics 115-107 in Tuesday's NBA action, with LeBron James scoring 26 points.

Rookie point guard Norris Cole came up with 14 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter to help Miami resist Boston's surge, which saw the Celtics twice cut the lead to three points in the closing minutes. Cole delivered the riposte both times with a pair of jump shots, and the Heat escaped. Ray Allen scored 28 points on 8 for 12 shooting for the Celtics.

*HAWKS 106, NETS 70

In Newark, New Jersey,

Atlanta opened a doubledigit lead early and cruised to a victory over sluggish New Jersey, which was playing its last home opener in the state. Marvin Williams had 14 points and nine rebounds while Jeff Teague added 13 points for the Hawks, who embarrassed the Nets in a game in which the crowd was booing the Brooklynbound team by halftime. Rookie MarShon Brooks had 17 points to lead the coldshooting Nets, who looked tired coming off a seasonopening comeback win in Washington on Monday.

*BUCKS 98, TIMBERWOLVES 95 In Milwaukee, rookie Jon Leuer converted a three-

Associated Press

point play with 1:17 left, helping Milwaukee hold off Minnesota in its home opener. Brandon Jennings scored 24 points for the Bucks, who were playing without forward Gooden because of a suspension and several other key players because of injuries.

Kevin Love had 31 points and 20 rebounds for the Timberwolves, whose late rally came up just short.

Minnesota was without coach Rick Adelman, who was attending a funeral. Assistant Terry Porter, who used to coach the Bucks,

*LAKERS 96, JAZZ 71

In Los Angeles, the hosts

avoided just the fourth 0-3 Utah, the last NBA team to start in franchise history by easily beating Utah.

Kobe Bryant scored 26 points and Pau Gasol added 22 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, who had much more life than the Jazz despite playing their third game in three nights to open the season. Los Angeles ran away with a dominant third quarter, making a 27-8 surge to set up the first win for new coach Mike Brown. Paul Millsap had 18 points and 10 rebounds for

open its season.

*BLAZERS 101, KINGS 79

In Portland, Gerald Wallace 25 points, rebounds and five assists, leading Portland over Sacramento. LaMarcus Aldridge had 24 points and eight rebounds for the Blazers. DeMarcus Cousins led the way with 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Kings, who struggled with field shooting in the second half and committed 23 fouls and 20 turnovers for the game.



-Aruba-1;0]D/1\Y

New products to treat hangovers

STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM © 2011 New York Times

NEW YORK – After a night of hard-partying in Manhattan to celebrate his impending fatherhood, Alex Fleyshmakher woke up the next day with a roaring hangover.

It was so bad, he said, that he ran to a family friend, Dr. Leonard Grossman, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon, who administered a mix of vitamins, minerals and protein through an IV line. (Grossman said a more accurate description was that Fleyshmakher "dragged himself" in.)

But "after I recovered," said Fleyshmakher, 26, who is an owner of four cellphone stores in New York City, "a light bulb went off in my head." And in short order, he and Grossman came up with the Bytox Hangover Prevention Remedy patch, which recently began appearing in stores in time for New Year's Eve parties.

It is one of several new purported hangover helpers created by young New York entrepreneurs and making a debut this winter.

So far, the new patch (from \$2.99 for one to \$124.99 for a pack of 50) is available at Bytox.com, in some New York City bodegas and in the minibars at Gansevoort hotels in Manhattan

Grossman said the Bytox patch (as in "bye" to toxins) should be stuck on an unhairy area of the body (he suggested a forearm) 45 minutes before drinking alcohol and kept on until the next day, or about eight hours after you stop drinking. He added that Bytox works in much the same way that a Scopolamine patch works to prevent nausea from motion sickness.

The Bytox package says the patch replenishes the vitamins and acids lost when consuming alcohol, though that statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration

In an interview, Grossman said the patch is more effective than a hangoverprevention pill because the ingredients – several types of B vitamins; acai and 50 for \$49.99, arrive in a manila envelope.)

Haysom, 34, abandoned a career in finance last year for the hangoverremedy business. She had worked at Lazard Capiand suffered the consequences the next day. She said she wanted Blowfish to attack hangovers on weekdays when "you need to be in work in 45 minutes and you want to



Brenna Haysom, the founder and president of Blowfish, a hangover remedy business, passes out free samples in New Yor. A mix of aspirin, caffeine and an antacid buffering agent, Blowfish are effervescent, lemony tablets.

(Michael Kirby Smith/The New York Times)

berry; vitamins A, D, E and K; folic and pantothenic acids – are delivered continuously to the bloodstream. With a pill, he said, many of the vitamins and minerals are quickly excreted.

But then he warned: "If you're going to drink a lot, nothing's going to help you."

Indeed, most medical experts agree that, as the Mayo Clinic puts it, "time is the only sure cure for a hangover."

But that didn't stop a company called Blowfish from introducing a new pill in September.

And if you live in Manhattan, you can get it delivered to your home or office within an hour by ordering at ForHangovers. com.

"We've gotten calls making sure it's going to be in a discreet envelope so bosses wouldn't see it," said Brenna Haysom, Blowfish's founder and president. (The tablets, 12 for \$11.99)

tal and at Apollo Global Management, which she described as seven-daya-week jobs. So when she did go out, she cut loose die."

A mix of aspirin, caffeine and an antacid buffering agent, Blowfish tablets are effervescent, lemony



An undated image of Blowfish, a hangover remedy.

(Tony Cenicola/The New York Times)

tablets sold in Ricky's NYC beauty stores, some West Village bodegas and, by early next year, Duane Reade stores. Haysom, who began making the business plan for the tablets when she was at Harvard Business School, said that taking two tablets is better than just drinking coffee and popping Advil because it's more convenient, works faster and is gentler on the stomach. And because the tablets are meant to be dissolved in water, they force the suffering to rehydrate. There is no Food and Drug Administration warning on the packaging because the active ingredients (caffeine and aspirin) are approved by the organization.

As for the name Blowfish, Haysom wanted something people would remember and tell their friends about. Although not everyone likes it. "They think of blowing chunks," she said. "Or Hootie and the Blowfish."

And if the branding challenges of this category weren't enough, it's also growing crowded. A new vitamin brand, b.cuz, plans to introduce a pill – called b. cuz you like to party – in late February or March. "In time for spring break," said Josh Peschko, 29, the founder of b.cuz. Peschko, who has a day job in finance and some personal hangover experience, said the pill (which

personal hangover experience, said the pill (which will cost about \$20 for a bottle of 60) will include vitamins B and C, magnesium and cysteine to help to replenish the nutrients lost when drinking alcohol, which is a diuretic. Like other hangover-remedy purveyors, Peschko acknowledged that while a cure for hangovers is the holy grail, after one too many drinks there is no way to escape the pain.

"There's never going to be a cure-all," he said, but "if you can wake up and not want to throw up all over yourself, I think that's a win."

Thursday, December 29, 2011

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Sony, Samsung dissolve Display panel joint venture

YURI KAGEYAMA **AP Business Writer**

TOKYO (AP) pan's Sony and South Korean rival Samsung are dissolving their joint venture in liquid crystal display panels as Sony tries to stanch years of losses in its TV business.

Samsung Electronics Co. will buy all of Sony's shares in the joint venture for about 1.08 trillion Korean won (\$935 million) subject to a final agreement, Sony Corp. said Monday.

The joint venture called S-LCD was set up in 2004. Sony, which fell behind in flat panel TVs, invested in a Samsung panel factory to ensure a steady supply of panels for its LCD

Sony's TV operation has lost money for seven straight years and the company is straining to return that key business to profit.

The prices of TVs as well as panels have been dropping so it makes more sense to buy panels at the market rate than to invest in production.

Sony, which makes Bravia TV sets, does not make its own LCD panels.

It said it will enter a new partnership with Samsung to buy panels, and will also continue buying panels from other manufacturers. Sony said it will suffer a loss

of 66 billion yen (\$846 million) for the third quarter of this fiscal year, which ends later this month, because of the declining value of investment in S-LCD.

Getting out the production venture will produce substantial savings after January 2012, when the deal



A visitor passes by the logo of Samsung Electronics Co. at a showroom of its headquarters in Seoul, South Korea, in this Oct. 7, 2011 file photo. Copyright 2011 The

Associated Press

is completed, according to Sony.

It was still unclear how Sony's profit forecast for the fiscal year through March 2012 will be affected, said company spokesman Takashi Uehara.

Running a country? There's an app for that, almost

LONDON (AP) — Britain's government says experts are considering developing a bespoke iPad app that would deliver key data straight to Prime Minister David Cameron's tablet computer.

Officials said Wednesday that the idea is being discussed, though Cameron's Downing Street office declined to comment on the details.

The Times of London newspaper reported the app could include statistics and information from government departments, real time news and Twitter updates.

Cameron has previously discussed his affection for his iPad, but acknowledged he needed "a little bit of help from someone in IT" to set up the gadget.

The British chief has frequently championed the country's technology sector and hailed the so-called Silicon Roundabout cluster of digital companies in east London.



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Stocks slide; S&P 500 turns negative for year

PALLAVI GOGOI AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks Wednesday, weakened endina a five-day advance in the S&P 500 index, as new signs of strain emerged in the European banking system. The euro fell to its lowest level against the dollar in nearly a year and Treasurys rallied. The Dow Jones industrial average nearly 140 points. The S&P is now negative for the year again, after barely turning positive on Friday.

The European Central Bank said banks had parked \$590.72 billion with it overnight, surpassing the record set only Monday. That means European banks were less willing to take the risk of making short-term loans to each other, opting instead to earn low interest rates from the ECB. The disclosure also hurt the euro, which fell to \$1.291, its lowest level against the dollar since January.

The worrying news from the ECB overshadowed two successful auctions of Italian government debt. Italy was able to pay much lower borrowing rates than last month. The strong demand from investors raised hopes that Italy would be able to avoid sinking into a financial crisis, as smaller countries like Greece and Portugal have.

John Merrill, chief invest-

ment officer at Tanglewood Wealth Management, said markets would remain vulnerable to flare-ups in Europe's long-running finan-

17-nation currency union intact. "We live in a Band-Aid world," Merrill said. "Nobody really is addressing underlying issues." might default on its debt or be forced to leave the euro bloc. A Greek exit from the currency union would likely cause huge disruptions for



Traders John Panin, center, and Robert Charmay, right, work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. A pair of successful bond auctions that raised \$14 billion for Italy forced down the interest rate the country pays on its debt and boosted European markets on Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)

cial crisis until leaders there come up with more convincing solutions for paying down their enormous debt loads and keeping the European leaders agreed at a summit Dec. 9 to forge closer fiscal ties over the long term, but investors are still worried that Greece

be forced to leave the euro bloc. A Greek exit from the currency union would likely cause huge disruptions for country's economy and losses for European banks that hold Greek government debt. Investors fear that could cascade into another global financial panic, as happened in 2008 following the collapse of the U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 139.94 points, or 1.1 percent, to 12,151.41. Materials and energy companies led the declines. Alcoa Inc. fell 3 percent and Caterpillar Inc. fell 2.4 percent. With only two more trading days left in the year, markets were thinly populated in a holiday-shortened week. Shares traded on the New York Stock Exchange totaled 2.3 billion, less than half of the usual volume. The S&P 500 fell 15.79 points,

The S&P 500 fell 15.79 points, or 1.3 percent, to 1,249.64. The Nasdaq composite declined 35.22 points, or 1.3 percent, to 2,589.98.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 1.93 percent from 2 percent late Tuesday as investors moved money into less risky assets. The Bank of Italy raised \$11.8 billion in two bond auctions, reflecting investor approval of the country's recently passed austerity measures.

Euro falls to 11 month low

NEW YORK (AP) — Fears that Europe's debt crisis is far from over pushed the euro to an 11 1/2-month low against the dollar Wednesday.

The European Central Bank said Wednesday that the continent's banks parked a record \$590.72 billion overnight at the bank, surpassing the previous record set only Monday.

Those figures reveal that banks still distrust the financial system and would rather hold money at low interest rates at the ECB than lend to each other.

Even successful bond auctions in Italy failed to lift the euro against the dollar. Demand for Italian bonds was strong Wednesday, and the country was able to pay lower interest rates. That's a sign that investors are more confident about Italy's ability to repay its debt

The country recently passed a big package of budget-cutting measures. The euro fell to \$1.2941 in late trading Wednesday from \$1.3069 late Tuesday. It fell to \$1.2910 earlier, its lowest point since Jan. 10. Trading was quieter than normal.

Many traders go on vacation the week between Christmas and New Year's. In other trading Wednesday, the British pound fell to \$1.5455 from \$1.5670 late Tuesday.

The dollar rose to 77.91 Japanese yen from 77.85 Japanese yen, to 0.9424 Swiss franc from 0.9340 Swiss franc and to 1.0239 Canadian dollar from 1.0183 Canadian dollar. □



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Last-minute holiday shopping gave lift in finale

ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. holiday shopping season turned out to be two seasons split by a big lull.

A surge in buying in the two weeks before Christmas coupled with a recordbreaking Black Friday in late November gave retailers a solid season. The doldrums between the buying binges show how shoppers have learned to wait for the discounts they know will come. For Dec. 1-24, spending rose 4.7 percent compared with the same period last year, according to research firm Shopper-Trak. In November, it rose 4.1 percent. A 4 percent increase is considered a successful season. A combined figure for the whole season won't be available until after Dec. 31.

The increase is good news for the economy, because it shows shoppers were willing and able to fund a holiday splurge. Consumer spending, including major items such as health care, accounts for 70 percent of the economy.

Still, plenty of shoppers are pinched for cash in the slow economic recovery, and were seeking the best deals. Stores have trained even shoppers who are primed to spend to look for a discount.

In the week before Christmas, last-minute shoppers gave retailers a 4.5 percent increase in revenue



Pedestrians with shopping bags walk in Herald Square in front of Macy's flaghsip store in New York. Cost-conscious shoppers haven't just been looking for bargains this season. They've also been more deliberate about when to find those deals.

(AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

at stores open at least a year with the same week last year, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers-Goldman Sachs Weekly Chain Store Sales Index.

The index estimates sales at 24 major stores including Macy's Inc. and Costco Wholesale Corp. Revenue at stores open at least a year is an important measurement of a retailer's performance because it excludes the effects of stores that open or close during the year.

Total retail revenue for the week ended Saturday rose 14.8 percent compared with the year ago, ShopperTrak estimates.

Gift buyers gained steam as the season went on. The store revenue figure rose 0.9 percent last week from the week before, building on a 3.4 percent increase the week before that.

"The downs and ups were much more accentuated," said Michael P. Niemira, chief economist at the trade group. "It just shows how cautious the consumer is. Consumers are bargain hunters more today than ever before."

The post-Black Friday Iull was deeper than usual this year. The two weeks after Thanksgiving weekend showed the biggest

percentage sales decline since 2000. Then, during the final two weeks before Christmas, sales surged again, by the highest rate since 2005, Niemira said.

"The holiday season was good but uneven," Niemira said.

Stores are expected to benefit when shoppers

come back to spend their gift cards, because people often spend more than the cards' value. In addition, gift card sales are recorded only when shoppers redeem them.

People have more money on their cards to spend. According to an ICSC-Goldman Sachs survey of shoppers conducted Sunday, 18 percent of holiday spending went toward gift cards, up from 14.6 percent last year.

ICSC said it expects holiday sales for November and December to rise in line with its forecast of 3.5 percent. The week after Christmas, which includes six shopping days, should be strong. But it's being compared with seven days last year because the week as retailers measure it ends on Saturday. As proof that consumers are timing their spending to when they know they'll get the best bargains, Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, was the biggest sales day, as expected, generating sales of \$11.4 billion, up 6.6 percent from a year ago, according to ShopperTrak.

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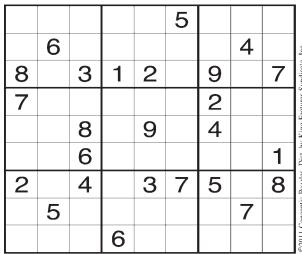
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POUNds

Anuba__TODAY **Conceptis Sudoku**



Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

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Difficulty Level ★★★

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New Year's

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Baby Blues



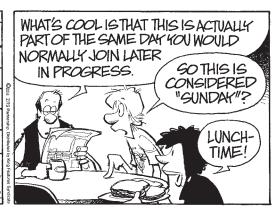




Zits







ACROSS

- 1 Fisherman's iov 5 Strong string 10 Lump of dirt
- 14 Eden resident 15 Rowed 16 Fully grown, as
- fruit 17 Run and play in
- a lively way 18 Forested 19 Creative notion
- 20 Coat parts 22 Baseball field 24 Get __ of; shed
- 25 Common people of ancient Rome
- 26 Narrow boat 29 Buzzing insect 30 Plank
- 34 Hideaway 35 At the drop of a : instantly
- 36 __and Clyde; famed outlaws 37 "Blessed __ the meek...'
- 38 Draw back, as 40 Prefix for stop

DOWN

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3 Not wild

5 Carried

7 Wrath

4 Napoleon's title

6 Armed conflicts

8 __ and thread;

9 Actor Cibrian 10 Shade of red 11 Venetian beach

12 __ house; Realtor's event

13 Deceased

21 Compete

23 Monastery superior 25 Fill with fear

26 Clickety-27 Burr or Spelling

29 Blind as a

31 Make invalid

33 Thickheaded

35 Witch's curse

32 Public uprisings

28 Female relative

darner's needs

- or sense 41 Tailbone
- 43 Author Fleming 44 Hovels 45 Bread recipe
- 46 Fore and stern to stern 47 Üntrue

verb

- 48 Like a stew that's heavy on the meat
- 50 Tavern 51 Naval officer
- 54 Cemetery services 58 Reddish horse
- 59 Less risky
- 61 Pitfall 62 Piece of
- evidence 63 Gives off
- 64 Facial spots 65 Thin cut
- 66 Perceive: feel 67 Begin to melt

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

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36 Forbid 50 Handbag 38 Actress Winona 39 Sup 51 Rainbows 52 Ken or Barbie

42 Cupboard

44 Natural environment

49 Alleviates

53 Hawaiian island 54 Wagers 55 Foot part 46 Burning 47 Animal's coat 56 Actress Turner 57 Gush forth

60 Diver's flipper

Maneuver likely killed Canadian skydiver in US

PERRIS, California (AP) —

A dramatic, high-speed landing maneuver apparently caused the death of an experienced Canadian skydiver in California, authorities said Wednesday. Thirty-two-year-old Michael Ungar, of Ontario, died Tuesday afternoon at Perris Valley Skydiving after a hard landing. It was the fifth death at the parachuting facility this year.

Witnesses told police that Unger's parachute was open as he made the difficult swooping maneuver and landed hard in a shallow pond, the Riverside Press-Enterprise newspaper reported. Swooping involves a high-speed dive to skim over the ground before landing. Parachutists are often traveling 40 mph (64 kph) vertically and up to 60 mph (97 kph) horizontally just before touching down. "It's risky because you are moving so fast," said Jim Crouch, the safety director for the United States Parachuting Association. "A lot of jumpers choose to land this way because it's exciting. But it's very unforgiving."

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In this Oct. 31, 2005, file photo, a harvester works through a field of genetically modified corn near Santa Rosa, Calif. Associated Press

Farming practices threaten widely grown corn crop

RICK CALLAHAN Associated Press

One of America's most widely planted crops — a genetically engineered corn plant that makes its own insecticide — may be losing its effectiveness because a major pest appears to be developing resistance more quickly than scientists expected.

The U.S. food supply is not in any immediate danger because the problem remains isolated. But scientists fear potentially risky farming practices could be blunting the hybrid's sophisticated weaponry.

When it was introduced in 2003, so-called Bt corn seemed like the answer to farmers' dreams: It would allow growers to bring in bountiful harvests using fewer chemicals because the corn naturally produces a toxin that poisons western corn rootworms. The hybrid was such a swift success that it and similar varieties now account for 65 percent of all U.S. corn acres — grain that ends up in thousands of everyday foods such as cereal, sweeteners and cooking

But over the last few summers, rootworms have feasted on the roots of Bt corn in parts of four Midwestern states, suggesting that some of the insects are becoming resistant to the crop's pest-fighting powers.

Scientists say the problem could be partly the result of farmers who've planted Bt corn year after year in the same fields.

Most farmers rotate corn

with other crops in a practice long used to curb the spread of pests, but some have abandoned rotation because they need extra grain for livestock or because they have grain contracts with ethanol producers. Other farmers have eschewed the practice to cash in on high corn prices, which hit a record in June. "Right now, quite frankly, it's very profitable to grow corn," said Michael Gray, a University of Illinois crop sciences professor who's tracking Bt corn damage in that state.

A scientist recently sounded an alarm throughout the biotech industry when he published findings concluding that rootworms in a handful of Bt cornfields in lowa had evolved an ability to survive the corn's formidable defenses.

Similar crop damage has been seen in parts of Illinois, Minnesota and Nebraska, but researchers are still investigating whether rootworms capable of surviving the Bt toxin were the cause. University of Minnesota entomologist Kenneth Ostlie said the severity of rootworm damage to Bt fields in Minnesota has eased since the problem surfaced in 2009. Yet reports of damage have become more widespread, and he fears resistance could be spreading undetected because the damage rootworms inflict often isn't apparent.

Without strong winds, wet soil or both, plants can be damaged at the roots but remain upright, concealing the problem. He said the damage he observed in Minnesota came to light only because storms in 2009 toppled corn plants with damaged roots.

"The analogy I often use with growers is that we're looking at an iceberg and all we see is the tip of the problem," Ostlie said. "And it's a little bit like looking at an iceberg through fog because the only time we know we have a problem is when we get the right weather conditions."

Seed maker Monsanto Co. created the Bt strain by splicing a gene from a common soil organism called Bacillus thuringiensis into the plant. The natural insecticide it makes is considered harmless to people and livestock.

Scientists always expected rootworms to develop some resistance to the toxin produced by that gene. But the worrisome signs of possible resistance have emerged sooner than many expected.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently chided Monsanto, declaring in a Nov. 22 report that it wasn't doing enough to monitor suspected resistance among rootworm populations.









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'Forrest Gump' to be preserved in U.S. film registry

WASHINGTON (AP) — Forrest Gump's oft-imitated line, "My momma always said, 'Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get' " will be immortalized among the U.S. treasures in the world's largest archive of film, TV and sound recordings.

The Library of Congress on Wednesday announced that 1994's smash hit "Forrest Gump" starring Tom Hanks was one of 25 films chosen to be included this year in the National Film Registry. The oldest reels are silent films both from 1912. "The Cry of the Children" is about the pre-World War I child labor reform movement and "A Cure for Pokeritis" features the industry's earliest comic superstar John Bunny.

Also from that silent era is Charlie Chaplin's first fulllength feature, "The Kid," from 1921.

Under the terms of the National Film Preservation Act, each year the Librarian of Congress names 25 films that are "culturally, historically or aesthetically" significant. This year, 2,228 films were nominated.

"These films are selected because of their enduring significance to American culture," Librarian of Con-

gress James H. Billington said in a statement. "Our film heritage must be protected because these cinematic treasures document our history and culture and reflect our hopes and dreams."

For each title, the Library of Congress Packard Campus for Audio Visual Conservation works to ensure that the film is preserved for future generations. That comes either by the Library's massive motion-picture preservation program or through collaborating with other archives, motion-picture studios and independent filmmakers.

The most recent film chosen is "Forrest Gump," which won six Academy Awards including for Best Picture.

Also starring in that movie about an everyman who ended up being part of the most iconic events of the 1960s and 1970s was Sally Field. Her perhaps most famous role playing "Norma Rae" in the movie of the same name from 1979 also made the list. She won an Academy Award for her portrayal of a poorly educated single mother who fought successfully to make her Southern textile mill a union shop.

Making the list is the animated Disney classic, "Bambi," made in 1942 about a deer's life in the forest, "The Big Heat" from 1953, a post-war noir film, and 1991's disturbing, "The Silence of the Lambs," which won Oscars for stars Jody Foster and Sir Anthony Hopkins. Hopkins plays cannibalistic serial killer Hannibal Lecter in the psychological and violent thriller.

The original "War of the Worlds" from 1953 also will be preserved along with "Poray and Bess," ''Stand and Deliver" and John Ford's epic Western, "The Iron Horse," from 1924.

Lesser known films were chosen for their significance to the art.

"A Computer Animated Hand" from 1972 is by Pixar Animation Studios cofounder Ed Catmull. The one-minute film that is one of the earliest examples of 3D computer animation displays the hand turning, opening and closing, pointing at the viewer and flexing its fingers.

Making the list were notable documentaries as well. "Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment," focuses on Gov. George Wallace's attempt to prevent two African-American students from enrolling in the University of Alabama and the response of President John F. Kennedy. "Growina Up Female" from 1971 was one of the first films to



This undated black-and-white handout photo provided by Paramount and the Library of Congress shows Tom Hanks staring as Forrest Gump.

Associated Press



This undated handout photo provided by MGM Home Entertainment and the Library of Congress shows Anthony Hopkins as Dr. Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter in the 1991 film "Silence of the Lambs," Bambi, Forrest Gump and Hannibal Lecter have at least one thing in common: Their cinematic adventures were chosen by the Library of Congress to be preserved in the world's largest archive of film, TV and sound recordings.

Associated Press

liberation movement.

Also included was "The Negro Soldier," produced by Frank Capra. It showed til World War II's end.

come from the women's the heroism of blacks in the nation's wars and became mandatory viewing for all soldiers from spring 1944 un-

Beloved pop artist James Rizzi dies at 61

VERENA DOBNIK

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — James Rizzi applied his playful, cartoonlike art style to unusual projects worldwide, from Volkswagen Beetles and Japanese train ads to cow sculptures in New York and the front page of a German newspaper. His creations included images for German postage stamps and a tourist guide to New York published this year. He was the official artist for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland and soccer World Cup games in France.

"With his art, what you see is what you get," said Alexander Lieventhal, an executive at Art 28 GmbH & Co. in Stuttgart, Germany, which manages and sells Rizzi's work. "Any child can look at it and understand what he's trying to convey: a celebration of life."

Rizzi, a native of Brooklyn, died Monday at his New York studio at age 61. He had a heart condition, Lieventhal said. Rizzi studied art at the University of Florida in Gainesville, where his groundbreaking techniques began with three-dimensional constructions that evolved from a youthful failure. For his classes in painting, printmaking and sculpturing, he had to hand in work for grades in all three subjects.



A file photo shows Johnny Weissmuller, right, as Tarzan, Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane, and Cheetah the chimpanzee, in a scene from the 1932 movie Tarzan the Ape Man.

PALM HARBOR, Florida (AP)

Associated Press

 A Florida animal sanctuary says Cheetah the chimpanzee sidekick in the Tarzan movies of the early

Cheetah the chimp from 1930s Tarzan flicks dies

1930s has died at age 80. Suncoast Primate Sanctuary in Palm Harbor announced that Cheetah died Dec. 24 of kidney fail-

Sanctuary outreach director Debbie Cobb on Wednesday told The Tampa Tribune newspaper that Cheetah was outgoing, loved finger painting and liked to see people laugh. She says he seemed to be tuned into human feelings. Based on the works of author Edgar Rice Burroughs, the Tarzan stories, which have spawned scores of

books and films over the years, chronicle the adventures of a man who was raised by apes in Africa.

Cheetah was the comic relief in the Tarzan films that starred American Olympic gold medal swimmer Johnny Weissmuller. Cobb says Cheetah came to the sanctuary from Weissmuller's estate sometime around 1960.

Cobb says Cheetah wasn't a troublemaker. Still, sanctuary volunteer Ron Priest says that when the chimp didn't like what was going on, he would throw feces.



Movie crowds dip to 16-year low as apathy lingers

DAVID GERMAIN AP Movie Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An "Avatar" hangover accounted for Hollywood's dismal showing early this year, when revenues lagged far behind 2010 receipts that had been inflated by the huge success of James Cameron's sci-fi sensation.

Just what has kept the movie business in the dumps the rest of 2011 is anyone's quess.

A solid summer lineup helped studios catch up to 2010, but ticket sales flattened again in the fall and have remained sluggish right into what was expected to be a terrific holiday season

The result: projected domestic revenues for the year of \$10.15 billion, down 4 percent from 2010's, according to box-office tracker Hollywood.com. Taking higher ticket prices into account, movie attendance is off even more, with an estimated 1.275 billion tickets sold, a 4.8 percent decline and the smallest movie audience since 1995, when admissions totaled 1.26 billion. "There were a lot of high-profile movies that just ended up being a little less than were hoped for," said Chris Aronson, head of distribution for 20th Century Fox, whose sequel "Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked" has been part of an under-achieving lineup of family films for the holidays. "The fall was pretty dismal. There just weren't any real breakaway, wideappeal films."

Big franchises still are knocking it out of the park. "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2," the finale to J.K. Rowling's fantasy epic, was the year's biggest earner and the top-grossing film in the series at \$381 million domestically and \$1.3 billion worldwide.

"Transformers: Dark of the Moon" pulled in \$352 million domestically and \$1.1 billion worldwide, while "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn — Part 1" has climbed to \$271 million domestically and \$650 million worldwide.



In this file film publicity image released by Warner Bros. Pictures, from left, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint and Daniel Radcliffe are shown in a scene from "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2."

Associated Press



In this file film publicity image released by Paramount Pictures, Shia LaBeouf plays Sam Witwicky, left, and Rosie Huntington-Whiteley plays Carly Miller in a scene from "Transformers: Dark of the Moon." Associated Press

Other franchises did well in 2011 but came up short of their predecessors on the domestic front, among them "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides," "The Hangover Part II," "Kung Fu Panda 2," "Cars 2" and "X-Men: First Class." Strong overseas business has helped make up for shrinking domestic revenues and declining DVD sales. But 2011 was the second-straight year that domestic attendance declined sharply, and audiences generally have been shrinking since 2002, when admissions hit a modern high of 1.6 billion.

It could be a case of the same-old same-olds, with fans growing tired of over-familiar characters and stories. It could be over-crowded weekends such as Thanksgiving, when studios loaded up on fam-

ily films that cannibalized one another's audiences. It could be the economy, with fans growing more selective on how often they spend their spare cash to catch a movie, particularly at a time when so many films play in 3-D with premium ticket prices.

And it could be the times we live in, when audiences have so many gadgets to play with that they don't need to go to the movies as much as they once did. "It's not any one thing. It's a little bit of everything," said Jeff Goldstein, general sales manager at Warner Bros., whose Robert Downey Jr. sequel "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows" has done solid business, yet is coming in well short of the first installment. "But consumers are being more specific with their choices on how to spend their mon-

ey. The options are a little greater than they were a few years ago with gaming and social-networking opportunities." The year's animated slate failed to produce a \$200 million hit, the first time that's happened since 2005. Likewise, comicbook superheroes slipped in 2011, the genre unable to deliver a \$200 million hit for only the second time in the last 10 years. Even Adam Sandler, one of Hollywood's most-bankable stars, had a mixed year, managing a \$100 million hit with "Just Go With It" but barely crossing \$70 million with "Jack and Jill."

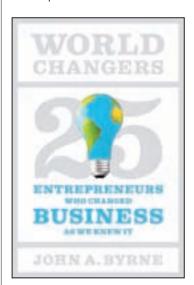
Studio executives typi-

cally blame slow business on "the product" — weak movies that leave fans indifferent. But during the first few months of the year, when business lagged as much as 20 percent behind 2010's, studios were confident they had great product coming, many executives predicting that 2011 would finish with record revenues, topping the all-time domestic high of \$10.6 billion in 2009. The movies themselves turned out fairly good, and surprise smashes such as "Bridesmaids," 'The Help," "Rise of the Planet of the Apes" and "The Smurfs" boosted business.

25 'World Changers' discuss companies in new book

JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

"World Changers: 25 Entrepreneurs Who Changed Business as We Knew It" (Portfolio/Penguin), by John A. Byrne: Some businesses become so embedded in our lives it's hard to imagine a day without them. We get up and grab a cup of Starbucks cof-



In this book cover image released by Portfolio/Penguin, "World Changers: 25 Entrepreneurs Who Changed Business as We Knew It," by John A. Byrne, is shown.

Associated Press

fee, sit down in front of our Apple and Dell computers, write documents in Microsoft Word while simultaneously searching Google. We might stop at Whole Foods before heading home, where a package is waiting from Amazon.com or a movie from Netflix.

In his new book, "World Changers: 25 Entrepreneurs Who Changed Business as We Knew It," John A. Byrne, the former executive editor of BusinessWeek, gets invitations to sit down with the people behind those big-name companies. It's an impressive accomplishment, but what he gets out of the conversations is somewhat uninspired. Maybe it's the book's format, a short introduction to each person followed by a question-and-answer transcript of the interview, which allows the subject to ramble unchecked. Or maybe Byrne isn't asking the right questions. But readers who expect to come away with any great insights are likely to be disappointed.

disappointing: lack of female voices in the book. Of the 27 people profiled (co-founders share chapters), Oprah Winfrey is the only woman. Yes, women currently lead just 3 percent of Fortune 500 companies. But why Byrne would choose to profile Carlos Nuzman, who helped win the 2016 Olympic Games for Rio de Janeiro, over homemaking guru Martha Stewart, Huffington Post co-founder Arianna Huffington or even Spanx inventor Sara Blakely is hard to imagine.

From The New York Times 31 Thursday, December 29, 2011

Kevin warns Republicans



MAUREEN DOWD © 2011 New York Times

WASHINGTON - We had two Christmas miracles this year. The first was that Kevin was there to celebrate his favorite holiday. After a random blood test last summer, my brother learned that he had a 20.3 centimeter malignant tumor in his kidney, struggling to burst out like the creature in "Alien." With the guidance of the saintly Dr. Jerry Groopman, and the brilliance of the Sloan-Kettering surgical team - the exuberantly blunt Paul Russo, the mystically serene Manjit Bains and the calmly proficient Gerald Soff - Kevin survived to enjoy Christmas with his wife, Ellen, his three sons and his 15 creches. I knew my favorite conservative was really sick when he stopped railing against the vast left-wing conspiracy. And I knew he was really well when he said he was ready to write his annual column. That's when the second Christmas miracle occurred: Kevin actually has some critical things to say about Republicans. Here's his political plum puddina:

It's time for some sense and sensibility. With a field of nine candidates, the Republican product is too diluted. That's the reason the polls have been so fluid. There are only two candidates with a chance to win the nomination: Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich. The rest are sincere, nice people who "can't light the candle," as someone said of John Connally in 1980. You are excused. There's only one who can beat Barack Obama. Romney was a governor and a businessman, and we will need that kind of expertise to pull us out of the president's famous ditch. Newt is too volatile and has too much baggage.

In October, I joked that the Republicans should suspend their campaigns since the president was sinking so fast on his own. I thought David Axelrod was on the verge of urging the president to give a Jimmy Carter malaise speech. Scheduling 16 major debates in states that thirst to be first was an unforced error by the GOP. I kept waiting to see Kim Kardashian and Paula Abdul as moderators with Lady Gaga performing at halftime. Trust me, everything you need to know from the candidates can fit into four debates. What genius decided to take the focus away from the president and his dismal record? (I know the threshold for genius has been lowered. I have heard both Paul Begala and Tim Geithner called geniuses).

First of all, the Republican primary voter will not decide the general election. The independent voters, who deserted the Democrats in droves in the midterm elections and are poised to do so again, will be the determining factor. Republicans should be focused on who can win the general election, not who has the most muscular conservative DNA

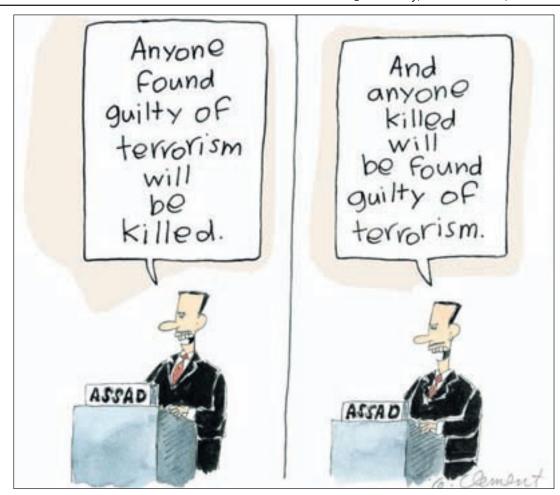
Second, let's get the conversation back to the president and his job performance. It will be easy to benchmark since he left office after two years and nine months to campaign full time for the same job but this time as the Republican populist Teddy Roosevelt.

Third, in a game of chess, you do not try to capture the king on every move. You accumulate smaller victories with other pieces until the king is defenseless. The House voting down the payroll tax cut after Obama would have been forced to show his hand on the XL oil pipeline was a mistake. If you see the president's approval rating going up, blame the Republican strategy.

The Tea Party has many strong points: fiscal sanity, orderly demonstrations and a penchant for cleanliness that the Occupy Wall Street group should try to emulate. But they must understand they are part of the Republican defense against the president. They cannot run around like the Knights Templar ready to die for their ideals. They compared themselves to the soldiers in "Braveheart." Did any of them see the end of that movie? I recommend they watch "Patton" and adopt his credo, "Now I want you to remember that no bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his country.

There are still plenty of things to be grateful for this holiday season: Nancy Pelosi breaking new ground with her befuddled appearance on "60 Minutes"; Eric Holder threatening to bring suit against states requiring a photo ID to vote (maybe we can text in unlimited votes like "American Idol"): Vice President Biden suggesting in 2009 that Jon Corzine should be the president's go-to guy to get us out of the ditch (I guess Bernie Madoff wasn't available) and contending that the Taliban is not our enemy: Jay Carney growing nearly as annoying as Robert Gibbs.

A lot is at stake in the next election: the Supreme Court, federal regulations on business, the American way of life. We should look at Europe (which the president so greatly admires) and ask if we want that to happen to us. In five years, it will be too late. If you think you're better off now than you were four years ago, be sure to order "La Dolce Vita" and "The Fall of the Roman Empire" from Netflix.



The Cratchit tax credit



ROSS DOUTHAT © 2011 New York Times

At Christmastime, we like to tell stories about resilient families. The Cratchits of "A Christmas Carol," for instance, who subsist on love, hope and 15 shillings a week. The Baileys of Bedford Falls, who survive wars, bank runs and bankruptcies because they have friends, one another, and a guardian angel watching out for them. The first couple of the New Testament, who manage to cope with a supernatural pregnancy, a murderous king and the necessity of delivering a child in the bleak midwinter, half-out-of-doors and far from home.

These stories resonate in part because of how easily they could turn out differently. Not every Tiny Tim has Bob Cratchit as his father and a reformed Scrooae as his benefactor. Not every George Bailey realizes that he shouldn't jump off the bridge when things look bleakest. And not every unexpectedly expectant mother has a St. Joseph standing by her.

Millions of Americans know this all too well, because the darker possibilities the Christmas stories hint at - divorce, abandonment, childhood suffering - are realities they have to live with every day. But that unhappy knowledge isn't evenly distributed. In 21st-century America, the well-off and well-educated have the best odds of enjoying the domestic stability that the vuletide stories celebrate, while the very people who most need resilient families - the Cratchits and Baileys, the working poor and the hard-pressed middle class - are less and less likely to have them.

This domestic dissolution plays a role in a host of socioeconomic ills: stagnating blue-collar wages, weakening upward mobility, stalling high school graduation rates, even the increase in juvenile obesity and diabetes. But it isn't an issue that politicians of either party are particularly comfortable addressing. Liberals worry about seeming paternalistic and judgmental; conservatives recoil from the idea of increasing the government's role in the most intimate of spheres. Thus America has a crisis of family life, but no family policy to speak of.

To some extent, the nervous politicians are right. There is no government program that can guarantee a happy childhood or a devoted spouse. (If you replaced Clarence from a Wonderful Life" or the Angel Gabriel of the Gospels with a Health and Human Services bureaucrat, those stories would probably have a much grimmer ending.)

But public policy can still make a difference in the way we organize our private lives, and public institutions should be designed with existing patterns of social life in mind. Where mating and marrying are concerned, both our policies and our institutions are increasingly out of date: They're built for a world in which twoparent, single-breadwinner families were a near-universal norm, and they don't take enough account of the mass entrance of women into the work force, or the mounting economic pres-

These pressures are strongest when children are young - the time when sustained parental attention can make the biggest difference to health, intelligence and life outcomes, but also the time when the juggling act for a two-earner (to say nothing of a single-parent) household is the most difficult and frenetic.

Not coincidentally, this is the period when many European nations have guaranteed extended parental leave: not the 12 weeks of unpaid time off in the Family and Medical Leave Act that Bill Clinton signed into law in 1993, but a more robust span that often covers the entire first year of a child's life. The attractions of this model inspired the Fox News anchor (and mother of two) Megyn Kelly, not normally a fan of government regulation, to accuse the United States of being "in the Dark Ages when it comes to maternity leave."

But there are costs to the European approach. Governmentguaranteed leave often gives less financial relief to a mother or father who is already at home

And Europe's overall web of regulations and job protections makes the labor market more rigid and less accommodating to part-time work - which is the kind of work that mothers, especially, tend to want. (A recent survey of U.S. parents found that 58 percent of married women with children preferred part-time to full-time work, compared with 20 percent of husbands.)

more flexible alternative, championed by the conservative writers Ramesh Ponnuruand Robert Stein, would change the way we tax families, dramatically expanding the child tax credit in order to ease the burden on parents with young children.

when he was sleeping.

Somalia faces alarming rise in rapes of women and girls

JEFFREY GETTLEMAN © 2011 New York Times

MOGADISHU, Somalia - The girl's voice dropped to a hush as she remembered the bright, sunny afternoon when she stepped out of her hut and saw her best friend buried in the sand, up to her neck.

Her friend had made the mistake of refusing to marry an al-Shabab commander. Now she was about to get her head bashed in, rock by rock.

"You're next," al-Shabab warned the girl, a frail 17-year-old who was living with her brother in a squalid refugee camp.

Several months later, the men came back. Five militants burst into her hut, pinned her down and gang-raped her, she said. They claimed to be on a jihad, or holy war, and any resistance was considered a crime against Islam, punishable by death.

"I've had some very bad dreams about these men," she said, having recently escaped the area they control. "I don't know what religion they are."

Somalia has been steadily worn down by decades of conflict and chaos, its cities in ruins and its people starving. Just this year, tens of thousands have died from famine, with countless others cut down in relentless combat. Now Somalis face yet another widespread terror: an alarming increase in rapes and sexual abuse of women and girls.

al-Shabab militant group, which presents itself as a morally righteous rebel force and the defender of pure Islam, is seizing women and girls as spoils of war, gang-raping and abusing them as part of its reign of terror in southern Somalia, according to victims, aid workers and U.N. officials. Short of cash and losing ground, the militants are also forcing families to hand over girls for arranged marriages that often last no more than a few weeks and are essentially sexual slavery, a cheap way to boost their ranks' flagging morale.

But it is not just al-Shabab. In the past few months, aid

workers and victims say there has been a free-forall of armed men preving upon women and girls displaced by Somalia's famine, who often trek hunventure out, it is usually to on the dangerous odyssey work, trudging through the rubble-strewn alleyways wrapped head to toe in thick black cloth, often lugging something on their



A rape victim covers her face to conceal her identity, in Mogadishu, Somalia. With the famine putting hundreds of thousands of women on the move, more rapes are being reported in Somalia now than at any time in recent memory.

(Sven Torfinn/The New York Times)

dreds of miles searching for food and end up in crowded, lawless refugee camps where Islamist militants, rogue militiamen and even aovernment soldiers rape. rob and kill with impunity.

"The situation is intensifying," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, the U.N. special representative for children and armed conflict.

All the recent flight has created a surge in opportunistic rapes, she said, and "for the Shabab, forced marriage is another aspect they are using to control the population."

In the past two months, from Mogadishu alone, the United Nations says it has received more than 2,500 reports of gender-based violence, an unusually large number here. But because Somalia is a no-go zone for most operations, U.N. officials say they are unable to confirm the reports, leaving the work to fledgling Somali aid organizations under constant threat.

Somalia is a deeply traditional place, where 98 percent of girls are subject to genital cutting, according to U.N. figures. Most girls are illiterate and relegated to their homes. When they

back, the equatorial sun burning down on them.

The famine and mass displacement, which began over the summer, have made women and girls more vulnerable. So many Somali communities have been disbanded, and with armed groups forcing men and boys into their militias, it is often single women, with children in tow, who set off to refugee camps.

At the same time, aid workers and U.N. officials say al-Shabab, which is fighting Somalia's transitional government and imposing a harsh version of Islam in the areas it controls, can no longer pay its several thousand fighters the way it used to. Much as it seizes crops and livestock, giving militants "temporary wives" is how al-Shabab keeps many young men fighting for it.

But these are hardly marriages, said Sheik Mohamed Farah Ali, a former al-Shabab commander who defected to the government army.

"There's no cleric, no ceremony, nothing," he said, adding that al-Shabab fighters had even paired up with thin little girls as young as 12, who are left torn and incontinent afterward. If a girl refuses, he said, "she's killed by stones or bullets." One young woman just delivered a baby, half Somali, half Arab. She said she was selected by a Somali al-Shabab fighter she knew, brought to a house full of guns and handed off to a portly Arab commander, one of the many foreigners fighting for al-Shabab.

"He did whatever he wanted with me," she said. "Night and day."

She said she escaped

The Elman Peace and Human Rights Center is one of the few Somali organizations helping rape victims. It is run by Fartuun Adan, a tall, outspoken woman

whose husband, Elman, was gunned down by warlords years ago. Adan says that since the famine began, she has met hundreds of women who have been raped and hundreds more who have escaped forced marriages.

"You have no idea how difficult it is for them to come forward," she said. "There's no justice here, no protection, people say 'You're junk' if you've been raped."

Often, the women are left wounded or pregnant, forced to seek help. Adan wants to expand her medical services and counselina for rape victims and possibly open a safe house, but it is hard to do on a budget of \$5,000 a month, provided by a small aid organization called Sister Somalia. Tough but not impenetrable, Adan wept the other day as she listened to the 17-year-old girl recount the story of seeing her friend stoned to death and then being gang-raped herself. "These girls ask me, 'How am I going to get married, what's going to be my future, what's going to happen to me?"' she said.



Fartuun Adan, who runs the Elman Peace and Human Rights Center, one of the few Somali organizations helping rape victims, at her office in Mogadishu, Somalia.

(Sven Torfinn/The New York Times)